

Her Highness: A Story about Sophie Chotek

An Honors Thesis (HONR 499)

by

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Muncie, Indiana

April 2019

Expected Date of Graduation

May 2019

Abstract

The assassinations of Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife, Sophie Chotek are generally looked upon as little more than catalysts for the beginning of World War I (the most destructive and brutal war in history up to that point). Franz and Sophie are more likened to a pair of falling dominoes or a lit match next to a keg of dynamite than they are to actual people with feelings, desires, fears, and obstacles. I wrote a play about the love story that developed between Sophie Chotek and Archduke Franz Ferdinand. The play follows their relationship from their initial courtship, through their star-crossed marriage, their deaths at Sarajevo, and finally their funerals. This play does not aim to separate Sophie Chotek and Archduke Franz Ferdinand's personal lives from their vital role in history, rather it hopes to integrate them to show that their assassinations were not only the start of an impending disaster, but a tragedy in its own right.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Jennifer Blackmer for agreeing to support me in this project as my faculty advisor. Her time, expertise, and insight were invaluable resources during this process.

Thank you to Emma and Garrett for reading a play about an obscure, historical topic. It's definitely not a task for the faint of heart.

Thank you to my family for their unwavering love, support, interest, and for instilling the spark of curiosity in me.

Process Analysis Statement

I have always loved history as a subject. To this day, I am awestruck by the idea actual human beings have essentially played the parts of actors in the world's comedies, tragedies, and dramas. Knowing that objectives, tactics, and obstacles are not just abstract theatrical concepts, but driving elements of the human condition reminds me that there is an inextricable bond between art and life. This connection is as evident in *Hamlet* and *Death of a Salesman* as it is in the Revolutionary War or the Civil Rights Movement.

Ultimately, my fascination with stories led me to attend Ball State University and major in theatre education. I want to provide students with the opportunity to share their narratives. I believe every person has the need, and therefore the right, to be heard by their fellow human beings. We all want to have the chance to add our threads to the tapestry of history. Essentially, we want to immortalize ourselves. As a theatre educator, I feel that it is my duty, honor, and joy to help students find their unique voice so that they can do just that.

It was that philosophy that led me to write a play about Sophie Chotek and Archduke Franz Ferdinand. Outside of the historian community, these two figures are often primarily known as catalysts for World War I. Their deaths lit the powder keg that was built on extreme nationalism, rapid armament, imperialism, and paranoia. They undeniably reshaped the modern world. Unfortunately, their impact on global history robbed them of their personal stories. When their deaths are attributed to starting a war of unprecedented destruction, everything else surely must be in mundane in comparison.

I will be the first to admit that I thought the same thing. I knew very little about who Sophie Chotek and Archduke Franz Ferdinand were as people, and I didn't think there would actually be much more to know. My perception did not change until I read Greg King and Sue

Woolman's book *The Assassination of the Archduke*. I found that their lives were far more dramatic than I expected. In fact, King and Woolman agree that "The personal love story of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria-Hungary and Countess Sophie Chotek begins in mystery, exults in marital victory, and plays out against incessant adversity. In many ways, it undeniably mirrors mythic elements of the traditional fairy tale" (xxvii). As I read the book, however, I found that their story parallels *Romeo and Juliet* just as much as *Cinderella*. After finishing the book, I decided that I wanted to adapt their story into a play.

At this point in my educational career, I had practically no experience in playwriting. I had written a fifteen minute play for an honors colloquium my junior year, but never before had I attempted to write a full-length play. Therefore, I found one of the most difficult tasks was knowing where to start. First, I reread the book and began taking notes (Appendix A). During this reread, I started picking which characters I wanted to include and jotting down essential personality traits. Additionally, I also started recording quotes and passages from the book that painted a picture of the world in my mind or expounded upon character. Once I finished the book and felt satisfied with my notes, I started mapping out each main character's motivations and obstacles. From there, I wrote rough scenes.

I decided that my second order of business would be gathering supplemental resources. I found a *New York Times* newspaper article that speculated about Sophie Chotek's possible ulterior motives for marrying Franz Ferdinand. The author expresses disbelief that the marriage was even allowed to exist "If by Austrian code those born to the purple could never descend from their high station and wear humble raiment it was still more impossible for the commoner to climb, and it is a very audacious and a very intelligently directed attempt to do this very thing that has for the moment convulsed the serene circles of the Austrian Court and indeed the

exclusive society of Europe” (Bonsal SM6). While I knew at this point that I wanted Sophie’s intentions of marrying Archduke Franz Ferdinand to play prominently into my story, this article helped me realize how integral a problem her supposed ambitions really were to the Habsburg Empire. It is one thing for a marital scandal to make news within the country of origin, but it is another thing entirely for a democratic country across the Atlantic Ocean to feature a story about said scandal in a major newspaper. Furthermore, I felt that emphasizing the global nature of this conflict would help communicate one of my major themes: the old, cloistered empire against the new, global society.

Additionally, I used Godsey’s article “Quarterings and Kinship: The Social Composition of the Habsburg Aristocracy in the Dualist Era.” King and Woolman’s book argues that the Habsburg Empire had long since lost all of its practical influence by the time Archduke Franz Ferdinand was in line for the throne. “What remained [of the Habsburg Empire] was a ruling family rooted in tradition, its past glories supplanted by a string of failed monarchs, highly incestuous marriages, and a depressing family tendency to weak chins” (King and Woolman 2). Godsey sees the potency of the Habsburg Empire in quite a different manner. “The image of the aristocracy itself masks much reality, and considerable evidence suggests that an elite with its roots deep in the old regime profoundly influenced developments in the area right down to the outbreak of the First World War and beyond” (Godsey 58). I chose to embody this juxtaposition between useless stagnation and viral aggression within Emperor Franz Josef. As the emperor, Franz Josef represents not only himself, but the entire empire. I wanted Franz Josef to show both a frail resignation when dealing with political affairs and an irresistible forcefulness when dealing with familial matters. He recognizes that he cannot control much in the world, but he holds on to what he can control with an iron grip.

My next step was organizing the plot. Early on, I decided that this play was actually going to be two stories told through alternating scenes. The first story is about Sophie and Archduke Franz Ferdinand's struggle to gain permission to be wed. In their way stands the main antagonist, Emperor Franz Josef, a man deeply entrenched in tradition and social form. By his side is Count Alfred de Montenuovo whose dedication to the emperor is surpassed only by his disdain for those he deems inferior to him: "Courtiers hated him, servants found him pompous, and society feared him" (King and Woolman 50). Finally, Archduchess Isabella acts as the wicked stepmother, working Sophie Chotek to the bone while simultaneously denying her chance at happiness with Franz Ferdinand. The lovers eventually overcome their enemies and are permitted to wed, thus resolving the first story.

Although the couple is now married, I determined from my rereading of *The Assassination of the Archduke* that the core conflict has not changed. Franz Josef and Alfred de Montenuovo refuse to recognize Sophie as equal to Franz. She is snubbed and humiliated at all official events. Her children will not inherit the throne. If anything, becoming the wife of the Archduke has simply made her more vulnerable to the attacks of the Austrian court. Therefore, I decided that I wanted these two stories to be told in an alternating fashion, so that the audience could see firsthand how little has changed. Marriage is a continuation of the couple's woes, not a cure.

It was also this parallelism between the pre-marriage and post-marriage stories that directed me to pick Sophie Chotek as my main protagonist. *The Assassination of the Archduke* is told from Franz Ferdinand's perspective. I saw, however, that it is really Sophie Chotek who stands to gain the most from the marriage. Conversely, after the marriage she suffers the most when Franz Josef and Alfred de Montenuovo refuse to accept her.

I sent my first draft to Jennifer Blackmer for notes and revisions. We met to discuss what she thought was effective so far, and what could be improved upon. In the end, we agreed that my play could benefit from more world building. I went back and searched for a passage in King and Woolman's book that I felt would inform my play's atmosphere. I realized that quote that aligned with my vision most was "...Franz Josef retreated to a world of archaic tradition, a universe of perpetual waltzes and sugary confections where he could ignore the unfamiliar and unwelcome modern age" (King and Woolman 3). This quote resonated with me because it showed how entwined Franz Josef was with the empire. He essentially was its human avatar.

Furthermore, Jen and I discussed including Gavrilo Princip in more scenes. Initially, I only included Princip and the other conspirators in a scene where they meet to plot the death of the Archduke, so that they could free Serbia from Austrian rule. When working on my second draft, I added two additional scenes: One that occurs before the meeting showing Princip and the other conspirators being beaten by Austrian officials and another that shows Oskar Potiorek interrogating Princip after the assassination. I hoped this would provide Princip with a fuller story arc instead of relegating him to a mere plot device.

Jen and I also discussed how my protagonist had shifted from Sophie to Archduke Franz Ferdinand. After reviewing my draft, I was able to identify the cause for this change in perspective. Although Franz Josef is Sophie's biggest obstacle to her achieving her goal (wanting to live a quiet and inconspicuous life with Franz Ferdinand), the main antagonist never interacts with her. Coincidentally, it is Franz Josef's disdain for Sophie that prevents him from engaging in any direct contact with her. This leaves Archduke Franz Ferdinand to act as the de facto liaison between the two. Franz Josef despises Franz Ferdinand as well. In fact he was misanthropic towards a majority of his family: "He 'liked only a few of his relations', recalled

his valet; ‘he quite rightly considered that many of them acted incorrectly’” (King and Woolman 5). Despite the animosity, Franz Josef was forced to interact regularly with Franz Ferdinand because he was the presumptive heir to the Habsburg throne. Thus, Franz Ferdinand unintentionally replaced Sophie as the protagonist.

This process has helped me recognize and appreciate the difficult task of cultivating story structure out of complex and multifaceted events and people. The revision process helped me exercise my skills of creative and critical thinking, and helped me grow as both an educator and a theatre artist. Synthesizing a coherent storyline from the boundless stream of history was the most challenging task I have undertaken in my undergraduate career, and while I realize that I still have far to go in this endeavor, tackling this project showed me that I do have the capacity, patience, and willpower to be a playwright.

Her Highness

A Story about Sophie Chotek

Rawlins, Mark

LIST OF CHARACTERS

Sophie Chotek	Morganatic wife of Archduke Franz Ferdinand. Aged 46
Young Sophie Chotek	Sophie Chotek, between the ages of 26 and 32
Franz Ferdinand	Archduke and future emperor of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Aged 50
Young Franz Ferdinand	Franz Ferdinand, between the ages of 26 and 37
Franz Josef	Emperor of the Austro-Hungarian Empire
Crown Prince Rudolf	Franz Josef's son and original heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne
Alfred, 2 nd Prince of Montenuovo	Grand Master of the Court; born from a morganatic union
Archduchess Isabella	Archduchess to which Sophie was a governess
Maria Christina	Daughter of Isabella
Oskar Potiorek	Governor of Bosnia and Herzegovina
Gavrilo Princip	Serbian Nationalist and member of the Black Hand. The leader of the three.
Trifko Grabez	Serbian Nationalist and member of the Black Hand. The most violent of the three.
Nedeljko Cabrinovic	Serbian Nationalist and member of the Black Hand. The most lax of the three. Father is a spy for the Austrian-Hungarian Empire.
Dragutin Dimitrijevic	Chief of Serbian Intelligence
Priest	Officiates Franz Ferdinand's and Sophie's wedding
Butler	Butler to Franz Ferdinand and Sophie
Doctor	Doctor who treated Franz Ferdinand after the assassination
Royal Messenger	Delivers the news of Rudolf's suicide to Franz Josef

Speech Writer	Wrote Franz Josef's public remarks regarding Franz Ferdinand's assassination
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Guards	Oskar Potiorek's personnel
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There are various scenes that contain multiple nobles, aristocrats, and other ensemble members. Depending on the capabilities of the production, these characters can be played by actors or implied with staging.

ACT I

Scene 1

The scene opens in a lavish and ornate parlor in Austria, 1914. The room should be extravagant and austere, decorated in the rococo fashion. It should not be stuffy or pretentious. It should have the feel as if a family actually inhabits it. A butler is dutifully dusting the room.

Suddenly, ARCHDUKE FRANZ FERDINAND bursts through the door. A look of pure unbridled, but also childish, rage is on his face. He mutters curses in German. He storms across the living room and smacks a vase off of an end-table, breaking it. He then pushes through the door that leads to the library.

Unfazed, the butler slowly shuffles towards the broken vase and begins picking up the pieces one by one and setting them on the end table.

After a few seconds, SOPHIE CHOTEK bursts into the room. She begins looking around frantically.

SOPHIE

Franzi! Franzi! Where are you—Gunter! Has the Archduke come this way?

BUTLER

Yes, m'lady. His Majesty passed this way into the library a few moments ago.

SOPHIE

Oh, Gunter! You're hurt! Put those down. I will clean it up later. What happened?

BUTLER

I'm afraid the vase fell as His Majesty was passing through—

SOPHIE

"Passing through." Gunter, we both know very well that the Archduke behaves like a spoiled child when he is angry. You do not have to defend him, and certainly not to me of all people. Oh! When will that man learn that he cannot behave so recklessly? Go get yourself bandaged, Gunter. I want to speak to the Archduke alone anyway.

The butler leaves. SOPHIE enters the library, not angrily, but determined. After a few moments, both

FERDINAND and SOPHIE *exit the library into the parlor.*

FRANZ FERDINAND

(Coughs loudly)

Humiliating! Degrading! They have absolutely no right! It has been nearly twenty years and nothing has changed! The vultures!

SOPHIE

Franzi! Calm down! Your actions have already harmed our butler. I will not have you hurting yourself, too.

FRANZ FERDINAND

I will not calm down! The way you were treated tonight was nothing short of despicable! They treat the future empress of the Habsburg Empire with the same disdain that they would treat a cockroach.

SOPHIE

Making me wait a few minutes to enter a ballroom after you is hardly treating me like a cockroach, Franzi. Besides, you forget that it takes a lot to kill a cockroach.

FRANZ FERDINAND

(Coughing loudly into a handkerchief)

Soph, don't be facetious. Every snub, every sleight is a mockery on my ability—

SOPHIE

Franzi! Sit down and be quiet! I will not have your boorish pride make a widow of me.

FRANZ FERDINAND

It's that snake, Montenuovo—

SOPHIE

Forget Montenuovo, darling! Forget the ball! Forget everything! We are away from all of that now.

FRANZ FERDINAND

It's just not...fair. It's not fair, Soph.

SOPHIE

We knew it wouldn't be, Franzi.

FRANZ FERDINAND

How? How can you be so resolute in the face of so much adversity? The people hate us. The Aristocracy hates us. The Emperor hates us. And, somehow, I am supposed to unite them all under one flag. I can't do it, Soph. Not without you by my side.

SOPHIE

I will be by your side, Franz. Always.

FRANZ FERDINAND

Not to the world you won't. As far as the empire is concerned, you don't even exist.

SOPHIE

Good. I don't want the empire in our marriage. I just want us.

FRANZ FERDINAND

Oh, they will be in our marriage. They just don't have the added hindrance of feigning politeness as they meddle in it.

SOPHIE

If tonight's insults are the indications of what I'm to expect, I think I can bear it.

(SOPHIE *chuckles*)

FRANZ FERDINAND

What are you giggling about?

SOPHIE

Me? Nothing. Nothing at all.

FRANZ FERDINAND

That is not nothing. What are you laughing at?

SOPHIE

I just find it amusing to think that the only weapon the most powerful man in East Europe has against one woman is to delay her privilege to dance for fifteen minutes.

Silence for a moment. They then burst into laughter, partly from exhaustion, partly from the absurdity of the situation. Finally they embrace each other. Lights fade to black.

ACT ISCENE 2

*A parlor in a hunting lodge in Austria, 1894.
 ARCHDUCHESS ISABELLA is sitting on a
 chaise, opposite of her daughter, MARIA
 CHRISTINA. YOUNG SOPHIE CHOTEK is
 adjusting and tidying furniture around the room.*

ISABELLA

Will they be here soon?

YOUNG SOPHIE

We just received word that the party is riding this way as we speak.

ISABELLA

Oh good! Good! Is lunch prepared?

YOUNG SOPHIE

Five courses, waiting to be served, m'lady.

ISABELLA

And the seating arrangements?

YOUNG SOPHIE

His Majesty is on your right, and the princess is on his left.

ISABELLA

Excellent! When I'm through with him, he'll be visiting us every holiday, including the Catholic ones. After all, it takes Austrian charm to charm an Austrian. *(Beat)* Who told you to stop cleaning? Maria! Sit up straight!

MARIA

Yes, mother!

ISABELLA

Good Lord, it has been an eternity. At this rate, the 20th century will be upon us before we eat lunch. What are they doing now?

YOUNG SOPHIE

(Crosses to the window)

It looks as if they are moving this way now.

ISABELLA

Already?! Sophie! Quick fetch me my blue ball gown.

YOUNG SOPHIE

Right now, m'lady?

ISABELLA

Would I have asked you to do it if I didn't want it right now?! Yes! Now! Go!

YOUNG SOPHIE *quickly runs offstage to fetch the dress*

MARIA

Mother, what if I don't like the Archduke? I hear he is a terrible boor.

ISABELLA

Don't be foolish, child. That is immaterial. Marry him first. Then you can spend the rest of your life finding someone you like.

MARIA

What if he doesn't care for me?

ISABELLA

If he is a smart and pragmatic man, he'll learn to care for you very much, darling.

(YOUNG SOPHIE *returns walking briskly, almost running, with the dress. She is visibly winded*)

YOUNG SOPHIE

Your dress, m'lady.

ISABELLA

Yes, yes! Give it here at once!

YOUNG SOPHIE *gives the dress to ISABELLA*

ISABELLA

(*Presents the dress to YOUNG SOPHIE*)

I want you to have this, my dear.

YOUNG SOPHIE

Pardon?

ISABELLA

It's just as I said. I want you to have this dress. Well, go on take it. I'm not going to stand here all day.

YOUNG SOPHIE

I-I'm deeply grate-

ISABELLA

Oh, pish! He's nowhere close to entering.

YOUNG SOPHIE

Who?

ISABELLA

The Archduke, of course! The whole court knows of his liberality. I want him to know how generous and charitable the house of Teschen can be, even to the servants. Give that back! You'll ruin it before it's even yours!

ISABELLA *snatches the dress away from* YOUNG SOPHIE

ISABELLA

I'm going to go check on the kitchen staff. Maria, come with me. We must discuss what you and the Archduke are going to talk about at lunch!

MARIA

Shouldn't the conversation develop naturally?

ISABELLA

Heavens, no! You can't leave something that important up to chance! Sophie! Take this dress and hang it back up in my wardrobe!

ISABELLA *flings the dress at* YOUNG SOPHIE *who lunges forward to catch it.* ISABELLA and MARIA *exit.*

YOUNG SOPHIE *begins to leave the room as well to put the dress back when suddenly* YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND *bursts into room from the outside doors. Both* YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND *and* YOUNG SOPHIE *are startled and taken aback by each other.*

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

Where is the Archduchess?

YOUNG SOPHIE

Uh, she has stepped out of the room momentarily, your highness. She will be back shortly.

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

Ah. I see.

YOUNG SOPHIE

Is there anything I can assist you with, your highness?

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

No, no...I'm fine.

YOUNG SOPHIE

If you don't mind my saying, you seem rather nervous for someone who is fine.

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

And you are rather impertinent for a mere servant. (SOPHIE *begins to apologize*) I'm sorry, that was very rude of me. To tell the truth, I would much prefer to be in your position right now.

YOUNG SOPHIE

Why is that?

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

I don't think you would understand. You would probably just think me spoiled.

YOUNG SOPHIE

I doubt that, your highness.

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

You sound very sure of yourself.

YOUNG SOPHIE

I beg your majesty's pardon, but I was unaware that I had any reason not to be sure of myself.

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

You do recognize me, don't you?

YOUNG SOPHIE

Archduke Franz Ferdinand, nephew to Emperor Franz Josef and the next heir to the Austrian-Hungarian Empire. Everyone knows who you are, your highness.

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

No, no, that's where you're wrong.

YOUNG SOPHIE

And why is that, your highness?

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

Tell me, do you know what the public thinks of me?

YOUNG SOPHIE

I make it a point to not pay attention to idle gossip, your highness. It affects much, and yet accomplishes little.

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

They say that I will be the most conservative, backwards, iron-fisted tyrant this empire will ever see. Did you know that when the emperor was saved by his doctor in the middle of the night from choking the first thing he did was chastise him for failing to appear in tailcoats? And I haven't so much as been in the same room as a policy debate. People don't know who I am.

YOUNG SOPHIE

I beg your pardon, but did you say that the people think you are conservative?

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

Yes.

YOUNG SOPHIE

Well, I'm pleased to inform you that the Archduchess does not share the public's views. In fact, they think you are going to be a revolutionary liberal.

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

Oh, Good Lord! So the public thinks I'm going to destroy this empire through conservatism, and the aristocracy thinks I'm going to destroy it through liberalism. Well, at least they can agree on the outcome. How did a servant who claims to be staunchly opposed to gossip come across this knowledge in the first place?

YOUNG SOPHIE

I feel that I should inform His Majesty that despite outward appearances, I am in fact a governess in this household.

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

Oh! I'm—I'm sorry. It was extremely premature to make such assumptions.

YOUNG SOPHIE

Please don't apologize. I certainly understand why you would. The Archduchess doesn't like to hire servants, not when she has perfectly capable governesses who work for far less.

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

You're her governess?

YOUNG SOPHIE

For a few years now, yes.

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

What family are you from?

YOUNG SOPHIE

The Choteks.

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

The Choteks! They are one of the empire's most loyal and lauded families! Why on Earth are you working here?

ISABELLA bursts into the room. MARIA follows much less energetically, but closely behind her.

ISABELLA

Franz!! Franz!! I didn't know you were here! (*Turns angrily to YOUNG SOPHIE*) Sophie! (*Suddenly remembers the dress in YOUNG SOPHIE's hand*) Sophie! (*She quickly, and rather aggressively snatches the dress from YOUNG SOPHIE's hands, before shoving it right back into her face.*) I want you to have this dress! It doesn't fit me anymore, and there's no use for it to go to waste, not when it could benefit those less fortunate than myself. I know you don't have enough space to keep it in your room, dear, so you just run upstairs and put it back in my wardrobe for now. We'll work it out after our guest has left.

YOUNG SOPHIE *exits*

ISABELLA

(Directed towards YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND)

There are far more people less fortunate than my family than there are more fortunate than my family. I'm sure you know what it's like to bear that cross, though, don't you Franz? That responsibility is one of many ties that bind our glorious family.

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

Oh yes, Isabella. I assure you I always feel my burdens strongest when I'm around family.

ISABELLA

Speaking of family, how do you think Austria-Hungary is going to be affected now that Nicholas is emperor? As I'm sure you know, his father was quite the tyrant. Maybe that will change with a younger ruler. But that will take quite a bit of delicacy. One wrong move, and suddenly half of your army is starving on the Russian front. I'm sure you've noticed things are changing quite rapidly, Franz. Frankly, I find it exhausting what with all of these new machines and the hustle and bustle. I mean, how can anyone possibly keep up? And the rebellions! It's simply atrocious. When I was a girl, we never had so much violence. The empire has existed for hundreds of years, why everyone is just now finding fault with it, I'll never know, but I'm sure you're just the boy to take charge in this new and exciting world.

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

I hope he's happy.

ISABELLA

Who?

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

Nicholas.

ISABELLA

Why wouldn't he possibly be happy?

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

I imagine that it would be hard to rule over an entire nation. Everyone is looking to you to be a pillar of strength and surety, but what if you don't know the right answer for anything? What if you have doubts about everything? What if you cannot keep straight who is the Earl of Essex, or what if you just don't care?! What if you simply are not meant to rule? You're absolutely terrified for yourself, for your empire, for everyone...I would imagine.

ISABELLA

Yes, well, you must remember that you do not have to go it alone. Nicholas and Alexandra are madly in love, and it makes perfect sense that that love would spread to Russia. I'm sure they have many long and happy years together surrounded by adoring subjects. Marriage is a wonderful institution that strengthens both the individual as well as the empire. It has for centuries, and it will for centuries to come. I don't know what I would do if Maria couldn't find a suitable husband to take care of her. I'm sure you would agree that she is just far too precious to all of us to trust to good fortune. That's why we must plan these things with the deepest consideration. And I know, dear cousin, I know what a deeply considerate person you are.

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

Who are you talking about?

ISABELLA

I—Oh! Maria! Maria, come here! (MARIA *dutifully presents herself to the Archduke.*) I know the years have turned into a beauty, but I'm sure you'll recognize her the moment you see her face again.

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND *and MARIA stand face to face and stare at each other*

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

No. I do not.

ISABELLA

Ah! Even better! You'll have so much to learn about each other over lunch, which is ready to serve. If you would follow me this way, Franz, we have a menu that I know you will simply adore—

ISABELLA *begins to lead* YOUNG FRANZ
FERDINAND *towards the dining room.* YOUNG
SOPHIE *enters.*

ISABELLA

Ah! Sophie! We will be taking our dinner now. You can get back to cleaning the parlor.

ISABELLA *begins walking toward the kitchen
door, then turns back to look at* YOUNG FRANZ
FERDINAND

Franz dear, are you coming?

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

In a moment, Isabella. There is something I wanted to say to Miss— Governess Chotek.

ISABELLA

Of course, of course! We'll be anxiously awaiting you in the dining room.

ISABELLA *exits into the dining room*

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

So what do you think?

YOUNG SOPHIE

Think about what, your highness?

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

Do you think I am a conservative or a liberal?

YOUNG SOPHIE

I have no informed opinion on the matter either way, your highness.

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

Neither does the rest of the empire, but that does not stop them from expressing it. So what do you think? Am I conservative or liberal?

YOUNG SOPHIE

I don't think you are either.

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

And why is that?

YOUNG SOPHIE

I really shouldn't say.

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

Please do. I don't have any tact, and I would be loath to expect someone else to have any when talking to me.

YOUNG SOPHIE

Well, your highness, I don't think you are a politician, and I don't think you ever will be. Your majesty, if that was out of place, please for—

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

It seems I am destined to be full of apologies tonight.

YOUNG SOPHIE

I don't understand.

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

You do know me, or at least you know me better than most. So if I am not a politician, what am I?

YOUNG SOPHIE

I—...Do you know?

YOUNG SOPHIE

Sir?

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

Not all of the time, no...So what am I? Hmm?

YOUNG SOPHIE

I-I do not know, your majesty. I've only just met you.

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

Of course. I understand.

YOUNG SOPHIE

But if you don't know who you are, I suggest you find out.

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

And how should I go about doing that exactly?

YOUNG SOPHIE

Well, let's start with something simple: What do you enjoy?

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

That question is absolutely juvenile!

YOUNG SOPHIE

Yes it is, but did anyone ever bother to ask you that question as a child?

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

...No

YOUNG SOPHIE

Then we are left to address it now: What do you enjoy?

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

I enjoy military reviews, formal balls, various state functions—

YOUNG SOPHIE

Please your majesty, I believe lying to a lady is in poor taste no matter her station.

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

I enjoy...gardening

YOUNG SOPHIE

Really? What kind of flowers do you like to grow?

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

Lilies.

YOUNG SOPHIE

Oh, I love lilies! But I would have imagined that the Austrian climate would be too cold for them to bloom.

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

It can be very difficult, but if you are willing to put in the time and effort, you can coax marvelous blooms from them. I suppose most people just don't think they are worth the time.

YOUNG SOPHIE

Well, I pity those people. A lily bloom is such a beautiful thing.

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

I...couldn't agree more. Thank you, Governess Chotek.

YOUNG SOPHIE

You can call me, Sophie, Your Majesty.

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

And you may call me Franz. (YOUNG SOPHIE *starts to protest*) I insist. Sophie, why does a person of your family's reputation work for someone as difficult as Isabella?

YOUNG SOPHIE

Unfortunately, your highness, honor does not always insure wealth.

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

The way she behaves towards you is outrageous, though! To treat the Choteks with such disrespect, especially one as—

YOUNG SOPHIE

Your highness?

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

A-As well-bred as you. (*Awkward pause. He fidgets and nervously plays with the gold pocket watch in his waistcoat.*) Here. I want you to have this. (*Reaches into his breast pocket and hands YOUNG SOPHIE a card*) It's my mailing address. I want you to write to me so that we can discuss these topics further. Will you write to me?

YOUNG SOPHIE

Will I—Yes! Yes, I promise I will write to you.

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

Good! Excellent! I am glad to hear it.

(*ISABELLA pokes her head out of the dining room door.*)

ISABELLA

Franz, dear! The food is getting cold. I must insist that you join us.

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

Of course! Sorry to keep you and (*tries to think of her name, but can't remember it*)...your daughter waiting, Isabella.

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND *walks into the dining room. YOUNG SOPHIE watches him leave and then exits out the opposite doorway.*
ISABELLA *spots the card that YOUNG SOPHIE left on the end table. She walks to it, picks it up, and reads it. At first she is perplexed by what it insinuates, but then her eyes light up in joy.*

ISABELLA

(*Calls out into the other room.*)

Sophie! Why don't you join us for lunch? It turns out there is room in the seating plan for you after all.

Lights fades to black.

ACT ISCENE 3

The Royal Palace in Vienna, Austria. Back to 1914, the day after the ball. FRANZ JOSEF is seated at an imposing, ornate, but stylistically outdated desk. He is clad in a ceremonial Austrian garb. His uniform, with all of its medals and decorations, should give the appearance of weighing him down. There is a large platter of colorful pastries on the desk next to FRANZ JOSEF. He is absent-mindedly eating from them. ALFRED DE MONTENUOVO is at attention by FRANZ JOSEF's desk.

FRANZ JOSEF

(Talking on the phone)

--Always a pleasure, George, my boy! Always a pleasure! Yes, you must visit more often! Ha! Yes, yes. Goodbye, now!

FRANZ JOSEF *hangs up the phone.*

FRANZ JOSEF

Thank God that is over. Good thinking inviting George to the ball last night, Alfred.

ALFRED

I take it the English king was well-received, Your Majesty?

FRANZ JOSEF

He's duller than a butter knife, and denser than the fog on his dreary excuse for an island, but he said he enjoyed the party immensely. And that should be worth at least a month of goodwill between Britain and Austria.

ALFRED

The ball was an unequivocal success, Your Majesty. It's all anyone has been talking about this week.

FRANZ JOSEF

Fake modesty, doesn't become you, Alfred. I'm a relic, not a moron. We both know you organized all of it, down to the last place card.

ALFRED

Be that as it may, Your Majesty, it was still an unequivocal success.

FRANZ JOSEF

Yes, yes, a success for you. Balls don't hold the same allure for men my age. They're just an opportunity to spend half of your time with people you don't know, and the other half with people you don't care for.

ALFRED

Speaking of which, did you speak with your nephew last night?

FRANZ JOSEF

Unfortunately, yes.

ALFRED

I take it he hasn't improved at all?

FRANZ JOSEF

Hardly. After twenty years, he is still an ill-tempered buffoon. There are fence posts with more charm than he has. Even worse, his wife—

ALFRED

His wife?! Your Majesty, I assure you that I went to the greatest efforts to insure that she would be nowhere near you—

FRANZ JOSEF

She never talked to me, Alfred. I never even saw her last night, but I know she was there. It's impossible to escape her presence. "Did you hear that she did this?" "Did you know that she said that?" She's all the aristocracy talks about.

ALFRED

Your Majesty, that's simply idle gossip. It means nothing.

FRANZ JOSEF

It means everything! Look at this!

He tosses the newspaper to ALFRED

ALFRED

"The Rise and Ambitions of Sophie Chotek"? This is an American newspaper. What does it matter what they write about the Countess?

FRANZ JOSEF

It matters a great deal! This is no longer isolated to circles of squabbling family members. This is now international speculation. Something our empire has no control over. I have no control over.

ALFRED

You mustn't let her affect you like this, Your Majesty. Your health—

FRANZ JOSEF

My health?! Alfred, I don't give a damn about my health. I'm over 70 years old. My time has passed. I don't create policies. I don't lead men into war. But I do give a damn about our empire's future. (*rummages through desk drawer, pulls out stack of letters and plops them on the desk*). Do you know what these are, Alfred? These are invitations from no less than ten ruling heads of state asking for the honor to host my nephew and his wife in the upcoming season. Can you imagine, Alfred, what damage that hotheaded dolt could do to the situation in Europe? Every prime minister, general, and legislative body is begging for an excuse to go to war, and ten monarchs are asking a walking faux pas and a Machiavellian shrew to vacation at their guest suites!

ALFRED

But it's as you said, Your Majesty, many monarchs don't create policies anymore, they don't lead men into war. Begging my pardon, but they do not have any tangible political power.

FRANZ JOSEF

Oh, they have power. Monarchs still have tremendous power, Alfred. Granted, it's not tangible, but that's what makes it all the more dangerous. They are not just people, they are their countries. I am this empire! If someone says they love me, they are really saying they love Austria-Hungary. Kissing the hand of the right queen can mean peace for decades. A sour glance in the wrong direction could mean the deaths of thousands. Do you understand? Progress is the concern of the legislature, stability is mine. My purpose lies in our ceremonies and traditions. Our family is symbolic of a greater truth, and right now I fear that I am its sole protector.

ALFRED

Your Majesty, I want you to know that the welfare of the empire is my first—

FRANZ JOSEF

Alfred, I will die and when I do I will be passing down the sacred Habsburg history to a tactless boor and his conniving wife. Already they have defied precedent, defied ME. In tragic irony, I must bestow the task of safeguarding our family name to the two people who would destroy it. I am wary, Alfred. No, I am afraid. The empire cannot afford to let them, the countess especially, forget who they are and what their place in this world is. So now you know why, when a newspaper from any country, even a democratic one, comments on my niece-in-law's ambition, I become extremely concerned.

ALFRED

Yes, Your Majesty. I understand perfectly.

FRANZ JOSEF

Good. I will be requiring your constant assistance on this matter, Alfred. Your expertise on royal decorum is second to none, and that will prove indispensable.

ALFRED

Of course. I would be honored, Your Majesty.

FRANZ JOSEF

Excellent. Now go inspect the staff. I caught one of my footmen with unshined shoes the other day, and I will not tolerate a repeat offense.

ALFRED

Of course! Right away, Your Majesty.

Begins to exit, but turns back

Er, Your Majesty?

FRANZ JOSEF

What?

ALFRED

May I have your permission to ask a question?

FRANZ JOSEF

What? Yes, yes. Out with it.

ALFRED

Why did you finally permit the Archduke to marry Countess Chotek?

FRANZ JOSEF *does not react.*

FRANZ JOSEF

That will be all, Alfred.

ALFRED begins to speak, but decides against it. He exits.

FRANZ JOSEF goes back to writing letters and eating sweets at his desk. Eventually he stands and slowly, leisurely ambles to the bay windows. He stands looking outside for quite some time.

FRANZ JOSEF

Oh, Rudolf. It should be you.

Lights fade to black.

ACT ISCENE 4

A hallway in a royal palace. YOUNG SOPHIE is hunched over a table, hurriedly writing a letter.

The sound of aggressive footsteps grows louder and louder offstage. YOUNG SOPHIE quickly opens the drawer and haphazardly shoves the pen and letter into the drawer.

ISABELLA storms through the hallway. Her face is steeled with determination. She blows past YOUNG SOPHIE. YOUNG SOPHIE cautiously waits a few moments. She then slowly opens the drawer and begins to take the letter and pen back out.

ISABELLA

Sophie!

YOUNG SOPHIE rapidly shoves the letter and pen back into the drawer. She slams the drawer and blocks it with her body. ISABELLA enters, crossing with the same determination as when she exited.

YOUNG SOPHIE

Yes, m'lady!

ISABELLA

I didn't see you there. I do apologize. I've been a tad distracted as of late.

YOUNG SOPHIE

That is quite alright, m'lady.

ISABELLA

I suppose I've just not had the time to rest lately. Franz has been visiting so often, I've been playing hostess around the clock.

YOUNG SOPHIE

That you have, m'lady. You need your rest. Why don't you go lie down? I'll wake you when—

ISABELLA

What are you doing in this hallway, Sophie?

YOUNG SOPHIE

I beg your pardon, m'lady?

ISABELLA

I sent you to clean the east library. What are you doing in the south wing?

YOUNG SOPHIE

I finished cleaning in the east library, m'lady, so I took the liberty to begin cleaning in here.

ISABELLA

Ah! How very thoughtful of you, my dear.

YOUNG SOPHIE

Thank you, m'lady.

ISABELLA

Yes, in fact, I think Franz was commenting just the other day on your compassionate nature.

YOUNG SOPHIE

Franz?

ISABELLA

Oh! I mean the Archduke, of course. Forgive my presumptions of familiarity. It's simply that he has been visiting us so much recently...as I mentioned before.

YOUNG SOPHIE

Of course, m'lady. No need to apologize to me.

ISABELLA

Hm. I suppose not. Tell me, Sophie, what do you think?

YOUNG SOPHIE

I'm afraid I don't understand—

ISABELLA

About Franz—The Archduke. He seems to have quite the high opinion of you. Funnily enough, you're one of few topics he speaks at length about. I think Maria and I have learned more about you in the past hunting season than we have in the 5 years you've lived here. Surely, you wouldn't impart so many details of your life to a man you were indifferent towards?

YOUNG SOPHIE

I'm afraid I don't know—

ISABELLA *opens the desk drawer and plucks out*
YOUNG SOPHIE's letter.

M'lady, I am so sorry—

ISABELLA

Sorry? For this? I've know about this since the moment you two met. Franz specifically asked for a moment to talk to you. That iceberg never wants to talk to anyone. I'm perceptive, Sophie, but more importantly I'm strategic. I knew I could catch an Archduke for my Maria much more easily if I had the right bait, and, darling, you worked perfectly. Why else would I bother to invite my governess to my social events?

YOUNG SOPHIE

You knew? You knew that he didn't love Maria and you're still trying to marry him to your daughter? How could you do that to her?

ISABELLA

I know you're not royalty, Sophie, but do you still think that marriage is about love in our family? The foundation of our vast empire is not love. Affection holds no sway in our court. Protocol is what holds this family together.

YOUNG SOPHIE

That is not how a family should behave towards one another! Franzi feels the same!

ISABELLA

Franzi! Interesting. At any rate, it doesn't matter how our family should behave. What matters is how it DOES relate. Franz will marry Maria. I'm sure he will be disappointed considering that you two were planning quite the quaint little life together, but he should know that the life of royalty is fraught with disappointment.

YOUNG SOPHIE

How did—

ISABELLA *pulls out a pocket watch from her purse. She dangles it mockingly in front of* YOUNG SOPHIE.

ISABELLA

You should have spent more time cleaning the east library before moving to the west hallway. *(She opens the watch and looks inside.)* This is Franz's correct? I'm guessing he left it behind after the last hunting trip. It's a lovely picture of you. I'm a woman, Sophie. I know this is a stepping stone to much more serious discussions. Serious discussions that should not be taking place between a man like him and a girl like you. You served a very useful purpose, but I will not have your ambition undo my hard work.

YOUNG SOPHIE

Ambition!

ISABELLA

You will draft a letter to him immediately. In it, you will end your relationship and demand that he cease contact. Then you will finish cleaning. I'm just now realizing that the south hallway is indeed in need of a good dusting.

ISABELLA *begins to leave.*

YOUNG SOPHIE

I will not.

ISABELLA

I beg your pardon?

YOUNG SOPHIE

I will not end my relationship with the Archduke.

Fuming, stands in front of YOUNG SOPHIE for several moments, appearing as if she is trying to kill her with her glare. ISABELLA storms offstage. Her next lines are spoken very loudly and angrily offstage.

ISABELLA

ALL SERVANTS! ASSEMBLE IMMEDIATELY IN THE SOUTH HALLWAY!

Quickly, but reluctantly, butlers, cooks, and maids begin gathering and lining up against the wall. They looked down. They are uncomfortable, afraid even. There is a general air about them as if they are standing in front of a firing squad. YOUNG SOPHIE has no clue what is about to happen.

ISABELLA

I have called you all here, because I want you to see what the face of ingratitude, of betrayal, looks like. And I want you to learn from this example so that you do not make the same foolish, idiotic mistake as Governess Chotek here. She took advantage of my generosity and hospitality to seduce my dear cousin, Archduke Franz Ferdinand. Her goal? To rise above her station so that she could repay my kindness with an equal amount of malevolence. What I'm about to do pains me deeply, because I saw Governess Chotek as a second daughter, but in order to protect the Habsburg family from treachery, I have no choice but to release her from her duties. Governess Chotek, pack your belongings immediately and vacate yourself from the premises within the hour.

YOUNG SOPHIE slowly walks past the servants. Their eyes follow her with pity and judgment. ISABELLA's merciless smirk/glare penetrates the back of her head. YOUNG SOPHIE is exercising

every muscle so as not to cry. She gets two feet from the exit and runs offstage. As soon as she begins running, she lets go, and the faint sounds of sobs is heard offstage.

Lights fade to black.

ACT ISCENE 5

Early 1914. Back in FRANZ FERDINAND's parlor. The furniture is largely the same as from the first scene, but it has lost its luster. The room is completely empty. It appears much the same as it did in the first scene. At first, silence. Gradually, shouting can be heard offstage. The noise increases as the argument approaches the parlor.

SOPHIE enters, followed closely by
FRANZ FERDINAND.

SOPHIE

--insane, Franz. Absolutely insane!

FRANZ FERDINAND

I don't have a choice, Soph!

SOPHIE

Don't have a choice? This is your life at stake, Franz! Bosnia itself is one thing, but Sarajevo is brimming with anti-Austrian sentiment.

FRANZ FERDINAND

I know—

SOPHIE

You have to tell the Emperor that you won't go.

FRANZ FERDINAND

I can't simply tell the Emperor—

SOPHIE

Franzi, you could die!

FRANZ FERDINAND

DAMN IT!!! DON'T YOU THINK I KNOW THAT?!?!?...Sophie, I'm terrified.

SOPHIE

I know, darling. I am too. I am too.

FRANZ FERDINAND

I have to go, though.

SOPHIE

Franzi, your life is far more important than a military inspection in Sarajevo.

FRANZ FERDINAND

No it's not. It should be, but it's not. I'm not a person, Soph. I'm a symbol. The people don't see a man when they look at me. They see a mobile heirloom. Besides, the emperor has just recently begun to relax his policies against you. You're being invited to more formal affairs, we're receiving more and more invitations from other members of the royal family. If I decline this inspection, it might undo all of that—

SOPHIE

Damn it, Franzi! Forget what the people see! Forget about my status! None of that is important! Your life is important to ME!

FRANZ FERDINAND

Soph—

SOPHIE

You listen to me. I will never be accepted into the Habsburg Royal Family. (FRANZ FERDINAND *begins to protest*) That is the truth, Franzi. My mere existence is a blemish on the family name, and there is nothing that I can do to erase that. I knew that the moment you proposed to me. And do you know what, Franzi? I don't want to be accepted into Habsburg family, if it means putting style before substance, if it means insincerely flattering women with half of my intelligence just so I can climb a rung on the social ladder, if it means foregoing my humanity. Blast it! I never want any part of that. All I have wanted since I met you is to share the rest of my life with the man I love. Now for several years, I have accepted that you have duties and responsibilities beyond your control, and I have been patient and supportive through your childish tantrums and your sleepless nights. But if you think for a second that I will patriotically let a miserable, decrepit relic send my husband to his death, then you are sorely mistaken, Archduke Franz Ferdinand.

FRANZ FERDINAND

And what would you have me do?

SOPHIE

Speak with your uncle.

FRANZ FERDINAND

He's detests me and confrontation, in that order.

SOPHIE

I know. And if he is faced with both, I'm sure he will be more conciliatory just so he can be rid of the whole affair.

FRANZ FERDINAND

Fine. I will visit him this week.

SOPHIE

Visit him tomorrow.

FRANZ FERDINAND

That's very short notice.

SOPHIE

Exactly. Franzi, this may be a battle for your life, and catching him off guard may be the edge we need. We are going to seize every advantage we can get.

FRANZ FERDINAND

Soph.

SOPHIE

Yes?

FRANZ FERDINAND

We should also prepare for the possibility that he denies my request.

SOPHIE

That is very possible, yes.

FRANZ FERDINAND

And if he does?

SOPHIE

Then you will go.

FRANZ FERDINAND

And you're okay with that?

SOPHIE

No, but I know that is not up for discussion.

Furthermore, I will be joining you on your inspection.

FRANZ FERDINAND

ABSOLUTELY NOT!!

SOPHIE

That is also not up for discussion.

FRANZ FERDINAND

Sophie! You will not leave your room. I won't permit it.

SOPHIE

I am not going to leave your side.

FRANZ FERDINAND

Your life will be in danger!

SOPHIE

So will yours!

FRANZ FERDINAND

But I'm an Archduke! I'm prepared for these kinds of risks!

SOPHIE

And I am the morganatic wife an Archduke! I'm prepared for humiliation, castigation, and demonization. If I am killed, the press will probably say it was a shameless power move to bolster my popularity.

FRANZ FERDINAND

Don't you dare joke about that! I will not lose you!

SOPHIE

No you will not, because I will be standing right next to you the whole time.

FRANZ FERDINAND

Sophie, this is insane! There is more at stake here than you realize. What about our children? Would you risk depriving them of a mother and a father?

SOPHIE

I know you think I am being rash, but I have given this subject a great deal of thought. An enormous deal of thought. If I don't go, what will I be teaching our children? Hmm? What will they think is at the core of our marriage, Franz? The empire. They will see you die alone in a foreign land because the empire willed it. Worse, they would see me powerless to do anything about it. I would rather die teaching my children about our love than live teaching them that the whims of the empire are insurmountable.

FRANZ FERDINAND

Your decision might leave our children orphans. They will have no one. The Habsburg dynasty barely recognizes their existence. What makes you think they will see that they are cared for when we are gone?

SOPHIE

They will have to stay together as a family, learn to rely on each other.

FRANZ FERDINAND

How can you possibly make this decision so easily?!

SOPHIE

Easily? Do you think this is easy for me?

FRANZ FERDINAND

No! Of course not, it's just—

SOPHIE

Franz, what if our children fall in love with someone who is not of their rank?

FRANZ FERDINAND

Why must I love you so much?

SOPHIE

I ask myself that about you every day, darling, and I have yet to find a proper answer, so I guess we'll just have to spend the rest of our lives looking.

They kiss.

SOPHIE

Go prepare what you're going to say to your uncle tomorrow. I will get the children ready for dinner.

FRANZ FERDINAND *exits to his study.* SOPHIE
sits down. She inhales deeply, and exhales slowly.

Lights fade to black.

ACT ISCENE 6

*In the past. FRANZ JOSEF's palace office.
ISABELLA is angrily pacing in front of
FRANZ JOSEF's desk. FRANZ JOSEF is
seated at his desk.*

ISABELLA

To be completely candid, Your Majesty, it is nothing short of an absolute outrage. I mean, the nerve of that woman, trying to steal what is rightfully Maria's! You remember Maria, of course, Your Majesty? Yes, of course you do. And after all I have done for her! I saved her from a life of impoverished mediocrity, and she conspires to unravel our delicate family tapestry. Won't you do something, Your Majesty?

FRANZ JOSEF

Isabella, I understand that you are upset, but affairs like this are not infrequent, and they rarely amount to anything substantial.

ISABELLA

With all due respect, Your Majesty, I do not think you fully appreciate the gravity of the situation.

FRANZ JOSEF

My nephew may be inexperienced and rash, but I doubt that he would jeopardize his post over a tryst. I would hope he is not that stupid.

ISABELLA

He had a picture of her in his pocket watch. She chose to leave her job as governess rather than break off the relationship. Such blind dedication can be a disastrous thing.

FRANZ JOSEF

Hmm...I will admit those are concerning actions. Love makes people lose all sense of dignity...Very well. I will talk to him.

ISABELLA

Thank you, Your Majesty. You are doing the empire a great service.

FRANZ JOSEF

Yes, yes. (*Franz Josef rings a small bell. ALFRED DE MONTENUOVO enters*) Alfred, please escort Isabella out. Afterwards, I need you to draft an invitation to my nephew.

ALFRED

Your nephew has actually just arrived at the palace, Your Majesty.

ISABELLA *and* FRANZ JOSEF *exchange shocked looks.*

FRANZ JOSEF

The Archduke?

ALFRED

Yes, Your Majesty. Shall I say that you will see him?

FRANZ JOSEF

Uh, yes. Yes, I suppose you should. Tell him to come in.

ALFRED *escorts ISABELLA out of the room.*
FRANZ JOSEF *sits apprehensively at his desk. He does not want to speak to his nephew, but he is doing his best to mentally prepare for the meeting.*

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND *enters. He looks determined and over-compensatingly confident. He is psyching himself up.*

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

Good afternoon, Uncle.

FRANZ JOSEF

Good afternoon, nephew. You're looking...well. To what do I owe this unexpected pleasure?

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

May I sit down? (FRANZ JOSEF *motions for him to sit.* YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND *sits.*)
Sir, I'm sure you have heard of a Miss Sophie Chotek from Princess Isabella.

FRANZ JOSEF

Her name has recently come to my attention.

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

Sir, I want you to know that Miss Chotek is entirely devoted to the welfare of the empire.

FRANZ JOSEF

That is good to hear.

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

She holds you in the highest regard, and—

FRANZ JOSEF

You must end it.

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

Sir...

FRANZ JOSEF

It was one thing when it was a meaningless affair. That is tolerable. But Isabella told me that she found this girl's picture in your pocket watch. Tell me that does not mean what I suspect it means.

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

I intend to marry her.

FRANZ JOSEF

I was afraid of that. Franz, it is imperative that you understand why you cannot entertain such ridiculous hopes. She is beneath you! It would be an embarrassment—

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

We are going to be married. I proposed to her and she said yes.

FRANZ JOSEF *jumps to his feet. He pounds the desk with more force than one would imagine a man of his age and frame would be able to muster.*

FRANZ JOSEF

YOU FOOL!! YOU IDIOT!! YOU WILL DISOLVE THE ENGAGEMENT IMMEDIATELY!! DAMN YOU!! DO YOU KNOW WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF WORD OF THIS GETS OUT?!?!

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

Uncle, I know this is unorthodox—

FRANZ JOSEF

Unorthodox!—

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

But I must tell you I am resolved to marry Sophie.

FRANZ JOSEF

Listen closely to me, nephew. I will give you one week to rethink your situation. If you cannot come to your senses by then, I warn you there will be consequences. Consequences that I do not think you are fully considering.

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

I will not change my mind, uncle.

FRANZ JOSEF

Then be gone. I have no use for pigheaded simpletons. I hope for the sake of the empire that you alter your course soon.

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND *exits slowly.*

FRANZ JOSEF *crosses to the door out of which*
YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND *exited*

FRANZ JOSEF

One week!

FRANZ JOSEF *crosses back to his desk and plops himself down. He rings the bell for* ALFRED DE MONTENUOVO.

ALFRED

Yes, Your Majesty?

FRANZ JOSEF

Alfred, the future of the Habsburg is hanging in balance, all because my idiotic nephew refuses to make sacrifices for the greater good. He is determined to marry this Chotek woman, a former governess far below his station.

ALFRED

But Your Majesty, he can't do that!

FRANZ JOSEF

I know that! I also know that this dissolution is far too important to leave to chance, which is why I am assigning you the task of speaking with the girl.

ALFRED

Of course! How should you like me to handle it, Your Majesty?

FRANZ JOSEF

Do anything that you see fit. Charm her, bribe her, threaten her, I do not care how you do it. Just make sure that she does not marry him. Is that understood?

ALFRED

I will carry out this task with the utmost zeal, Your Majesty. With your permission, I will start preparing for my trip now.

FRANZ JOSEF *dismisses* ALFRED.
ALFRED *exits. FRANZ JOSEF is left alone at his desk. (Lights fade to black.)*

ACT ISCENE 7

1914. FRANZ JOSEF's palatial office. FRANZ JOSEF sits at his desk. FRANZ FERDINAND sits in a chair opposite of him. FRANZ JOSEF is absent-mindedly devouring a tray of sweets on his desk.

FRANZ JOSEF
(*Speaking between chews*)

You do not wish to go to Sarajevo?

FRANZ FERDINAND
That is correct, Your Majesty. As was evidenced in my argument—

FRANZ JOSEF
You are feeling ill?

FRANZ FERDINAND
...No, Your Majesty.

FRANZ JOSEF
You are injured then?

FRANZ FERDINAND
No, Your Majesty.

FRANZ JOSEF
A previous engagement? With the Kaiser perhaps? I have heard he is quite fond of you—

FRANZ FERDINAND
No, Your Majesty. I have no previous engagement.

FRANZ JOSEF
Then I am afraid I do not understand what is preventing you from going on this trip.

FRANZ FERDINAND
As I said before, Your Majesty, I feel that given the large anti-Austrian sentiment that is currently festering in the region, coupled with the fact that my visit will fall on St. Vitus' Day, their national holiday—

FRANZ JOSEF
Assassination? That is what this is about? You're afraid for your life?

FRANZ FERDINAND

I have reason to believe that my fears are well-founded, Your Majesty.

FRANZ JOSEF

My boy, assassination attempts are hazards of the job. You'll need to be made of sterner stuff when you are emperor.

FRANZ FERDINAND

But, sir, we both know that the Black Hand is running rampant anti-Austrian campaigns—

FRANZ JOSEF

Why, when I was your age, I must've had at least seven attempts within a year, and I never batted an eye.

FRANZ FERDINAND

But, sir, Governor Potiorek's security detail is not nearly as prepared as it should be—

FRANZ JOSEF

And I've had numerous more since then, and they have made me stronger, more resolute, if anything.

FRANZ FERDINAND

Please, sir, the Sarajevo police force is hardly adequate defense against—

FRANZ JOSEF

It's not good for you to be untested. You've been coddled, spoiled, for far too long.

FRANZ FERDINAND

Sir! I have a wife and children to think—

FRANZ JOSEF

Does she have something to do with this, boy?

FRANZ FERDINAND

I— I don't know what you mean, sir—

FRANZ JOSEF

Your wife! You did just mention your wife, didn't you? Well, did she tell you to weasel out of this trip?

FRANZ FERDINAND

Do not bring her into this!

FRANZ JOSEF

I can tell from your eyes that she did. Those are not your eyes, Franz!

FRANZ FERDINAND

How do you know what my eyes should look like?! You hardly ever deign to meet them!

FRANZ JOSEF

That is enough! I will not be talked to in this way! Franz, I've been letting you bring the countess because I thought you had finally managed to curb that venomous ambition of hers.

Unfortunately, I'm beginning to think that is not the case. It's my fault, really. I was hasty in my assessment of the situation. No matter. What is done could easily be undone.

FRANZ FERDINAND

What exactly do you mean by that, Sir?

FRANZ JOSEF

As for Sarajevo, do what you wish.

FRANZ FERDINAND

Have you never loved someone?

FRANZ JOSEF

What?

FRANZ FERDINAND

Do you not know what it is like to be so in love with someone that you would do anything for them?

FRANZ JOSEF

Boy, I have loved. I have loved and lost and pined and lusted and admired and sacrificed. Do you think you are the only one who has personally suffered at the hands of this institution we call royalty? How dense can you be? Generations upon generations of royalty have had their hearts broken because of this job. But because we appreciated and honored the sanctity of our birthright, we persevered; we kept a stiff upper lip. For the good of the world, we forged on. But you. You got what you wanted, didn't you? And is that enough? No! You want to weasel your way out of even the simplest duties! Why don't you just abdicate, Franz?! It would save us both a world of disappointment.

FRANZ FERDINAND

Because I love this empire! And I know I am not charming, or witty, or warm, but every day I live my life trying to be the person I can be for Austria-Hungary.

FRANZ JOSEF

Really? Were you thinking of the empire as you were reciting your wedding vows? Good day, nephew.

FRANZ JOSEF begins attending to desk work. He acts as if FRANZ FERDINAND has already left.

FRANZ FERDINAND *sits in deep thought. Finally he stands and exits*

ALFRED DE MONTENUOVO *enters*

ALFRED

I passed the Archduke on the way in. Would you like me to make the arrangements to reschedule the trip?

FRANZ JOSEF

No need, Alfred. The Archduke has decided to keep his appointment.

ALFRED

He has?! But is that really prudent, Your Majesty?

FRANZ JOSEF

You sound concerned, Alfred.

ALFRED

Forgive my impertinence, but isn't it true that our sources are saying the unrest in Sarajevo could become violent at any point?

FRANZ JOSEF

They are.

ALFRED

Does that not worry you?

FRANZ JOSEF

Not at all. He has to learn to be brave in the face of adversity. I have no doubt he'll encounter a lot of that during his reign.

ALFRED

Yes, but I have reviewed the security detail that Potiorek has proposed, and it is ridiculously understaffed. I can't for the life of me figure out why—

FRANZ JOSEF

I am sure the governor knows what he is doing, Alfred. He is the governor after all.

ALFRED

Is the trip really all that important, Your Majesty? For the sake of the monarchy, shouldn't we—

FRANZ JOSEF

Are you questioning my authority, Alfred?

ALFRED

No, of course not.

FRANZ JOSEF

It is important because I deemed it important!

ALFRED

I didn't mean—

FRANZ JOSEF

I am Franz Josef the First! Emperor of Austria and Apostolic King of Hungary! King of Bohemia, Dalmatia, Croatia, Slovenia, Galicia, and Jerusalem! Archduke of Austria; Grand Duke of Tuscany, Krakow, and Transylvania; Duke of Lothringia, Salzburg, and Bukovina! And while I live, those titles will still mean something! I will see to that to my dying breath! Is that clear, Alfred?!

ALFRED

Yes, Your Majesty.

FRANZ JOSEF

Good. Now confirm the trip with Governor Potiorek and fetch me some more macaroons.

ALFRED

Yes, Your Majesty. Right away, Your Majesty.

ALFRED exits.

Lights fade to black.

ACT ISCENE 8

YOUNG SOPHIE *is sitting in a chair at a desk in her home parlor. She is writing a letter. The home is cozy, but modest. It definitely does not compare to the level of grandeur we have seen up to this point.*

There is a loud knock at the front door. It is a self-assured knock, but not overly aggressive or dangerous. YOUNG SOPHIE is taken by surprise.

YOUNG SOPHIE

Who—who is it?

ALFRED

Alfred, Second Prince of Montenuovo, Grand Master of the court. I wish to speak with the Countess Sophie Chotek. May I come in?

YOUNG SOPHIE *scrambles to open the door. ALFRED fills the doorway. He is dressed in his most official, imperial attire. His posture is perfect. Not a hair out of place. It is clear from this point forward that he is trying to control the room.*

ALFRED

Thank you. I know this must all be very perplexing. You were not expecting me after all.

YOUNG SOPHIE

That is very true, sir, but it is my honor to host you just the same.

ALFRED

Your graciousness matches your beauty, Countess Chotek. I'm sorry; you are the Countess, correct?

YOUNG SOPHIE

Yes! And I'm sorry, you said you were...?

ALFRED

Alfred, Second Prince of Montenuovo, Grand Master of the court, but please, I insist that you call me Alfred. This is a lovely home. Is it yours?

YOUNG SOPHIE

It's my father's. I'm afraid he's not home at the moment, and I'm not sure when he will return.

ALFRED

Oh, that is quite alright. Tell me about your family, though, won't you?

YOUNG SOPHIE

What would you like to know, sir?

ALFRED

Oh, I'm sure I would be enraptured with anything you would care to tell me.

YOUNG SOPHIE

Well...My father is Count Bohuslav—

ALFRED

No! The diplomat?

YOUNG SOPHIE

Yes! The very same!

ALFRED

Delightful! Delightful! So that must mean your mother is the Countess Wihelmina.

YOUNG SOPHIE

Yes!

ALFRED

Would you believe I've know them for years? Have they talked about me?

YOUNG SOPHIE

Yes, they've spoken of you.

ALFRED

I do not envy your father. It's a very volatile business being a diplomat. Assignments can change in an instant, and often the income changes with it.

YOUNG SOPHIE

Yes, he's complained of that very fact many times.

ALFRED

Oh, I'm sure he has. I'm sure he has. Do you have any siblings?

YOUNG SOPHIE

Yes. I have a brother, Wolfgang.

ALFRED

Ah! Does he want to follow in his father's footsteps?

YOUNG SOPHIE

No, he wants to go into the civil service.

ALFRED

Far more stable work there.

YOUNG SOPHIE

Yes...Is there anything else about my family I can tell you, sir?

ALFRED

What? No, no. In fact, as I said earlier, I am actually here to talk with you.

YOUNG SOPHIE

I remember you saying that, but I can't possibly think of any possible reason the Grand Master of the Court would want to talk to me.

ALFRED

Oh, don't be so modest. Word of your wit and honor travels quickly in the court. Princess Isabella herself often talked highly you.

YOUNG SOPHIE

I doubt she has spoken that way of me lately.

ALFRED

Hmm. Oh! Ah, yes, because of your little...debacle. Sophie, I fully acknowledge that the Princess can be unreasonable in her anger, and you were treated most unfairly.

YOUNG SOPHIE

With all due respect, sir, I hope you did not make this trip solely to console me.

ALFRED

You are sharp, aren't you? No, Sophie, I have something far more important to discuss with you. It concerns your happiness.

YOUNG SOPHIE

Why should the great second prince of Montenuovo stoop to concern himself with my happiness?

ALFRED

Please, I insist that you call me Alfred. The truth, Sophie, is that I am deeply invested in maintaining your honor and happiness, and I fear that there is a significant threat to both.

YOUNG SOPHIE

I see.

ALFRED

I sympathize with you, Sophie, I really do. The dream of a royal life is intoxicating, isn't it? And it's obvious that the Archduke is rather smitten with you, but your dalliance must come to an end. It's time to wake up.

YOUNG SOPHIE

You think I want to marry him for the comfort?

ALFRED

I don't blame you at all. If I were in your position, I would have thought to do the same thing. This is not the way to go about it, though. And the truth is, Sophie, marrying the Archduke would only leave you disgraced and miserable. You will be despised by every royal family in Europe for stealing the Archduke away from their eligible daughters. You will be feared by the country for being manipulative and ambitious. And finally, you will be judged and ridiculed by every member of court for being nothing more than a filthy peasant who seduced her way to the throne. The foundations of your legacy will be immorality, greed, and selfishness. You don't want that, now do you?

YOUNG SOPHIE

You don't know that will happen.

ALFRED

Oh, actually I do. As Grand Master of the Court, I have access to all the right ears and all the right tongues. And you should see how eagerly these people will devour any juicy morsel of gossip that they can get their idle hands on. Now let me paint you a different picture. If you break off your engagement to the Archduke now, you will be revered as a heroine throughout the empire. Royal households will be clamoring for your services. The church will sing songs to your piety. And most importantly, you will save the future of the empire. It's not a hard choice, Sophie. One simple letter can make a world of difference for you.

YOUNG SOPHIE

I would prefer if you called me Countess Chotek, sir. And I must decline your offer.

ALFRED

You're making a grave mistake.

YOUNG SOPHIE

Franz loves me, and I him. That is why I said yes to the engagement. And I will not let your threats frighten me away.

ALFRED

Love? What could you possibly love about that socially inept churl?

YOUNG SOPHIE

Have you considered, Alfred, that his churlishness is merely honesty? And the reason it seems so rude to you is because you fail to inspire a feeling of pleasantness in him? Simply a hypothesis,

of course, but Franz has said plenty of charming things to me, and I never once question his sincerity. And I'm sure you know that such frankness is a rare trait in today's aristocracy, I know I don't encounter it often in the Habsburg aristocracy, but I imagine that it never occurred to you that it should be valued and not reviled. It's like a lily bloom...

ALFRED

A lily bloom?

YOUNG SOPHIE

The point is, Alfred, that if Franz believes that the future of the empire is still secure with me by his side, then I believe it wholeheartedly as well.

ALFRED

What about your family's future?

YOUNG SOPHIE

My family?

ALFRED

You don't think I'm above ruining your family's careers, do you Countess Chotek? After all, it's just as I said: diplomatic assignments can change in an instant, and often the income changes with it.

YOUNG SOPHIE

How can you do this to me?

ALFRED

I assure you it isn't personal. Your relationship was a problem, and I was sent to fix it. That is all. There have been others before you, and as long as the royal family raises naïve, lovestruck fools, there will be others after you. You and the archduke aren't special, just impossible. One day you will understand why it couldn't continue.

YOUNG SOPHIE

I would think someone of your background would understand us!

ALFRED

What do you mean—?

YOUNG SOPHIE

Are you not the child of a morganatic union yourself?

ALFRED

You are not supposed to know that. No one is supposed to know that!

YOUNG SOPHIE

I—I'm sorry, I didn't realize it was private information—

ALFRED

Who? Who told you?

YOUNG SOPHIE

There was no one person, sir. I overheard at the various parties I served. Just bits and pieces really. It's...It's nothing to be ashamed of.

ALFRED

I tried to be reasonable with you. I tried to give you a graceful way out, but I see that common filth like you doesn't deserve such courtesies. Very well. I will destroy you, countess. When I am through, your presence will be synonymous to a plague. I will personally see to it that every royal function you attend fills you with such humiliation and resentment until you can't so much as glance at the archduke without feeling excruciating pain. Good day!

ALFRED storms out of the house and slams the door behind him. YOUNG SOPHIE stands in the parlor, shaken and confused about what just transpired. After a few moments, she moves to her writing desk and begins composing a letter, as she writes, she begins crying.

Lights fade to black.

ACT ISCENE 9

FRANZ FERDINAND *storms into his parlor in a rage. He is shouting, and cursing loudly in German. His uncle's name pops up into the curses quite often. He sees a set of vases on the mantle. He grabs one and hurls it against the wall. He grabs another and hurls it against the wall. He grabs a third and is beginning to throw it when SOPHIE enters. They stare at each other from across the room. SOPHIE crosses to FRANZ, takes the vase from his hands, and sets it down. FRANZ begins silently crying. SOPHIE holds him in her arms, calming him.*

Lights fade to black.

ACT ISCENE 10

FRANZ JOSEF *is anxious. He is pacing behind his desk, waiting for his nephew to arrive.* ALFRED DE MONTENUOVO *enters.*

ALFRED

Your nephew is here, Your Majesty.

FRANZ JOSEF

Show him in immediately!

ALFRED *exits.* YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND *enters. He looks emotionally exhausted and disheveled.* FRANZ JOSEF *is shocked to see him like this.*

FRANZ JOSEF

Have a seat.

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

Montenuovo had no right to harass Sophie like that! She should not be a part of this!

FRANZ JOSEF

No! She shouldn't, but you chose to bring her into it, didn't you? Since we could not appeal to your reason, Alfred tried to appeal to hers. Unfortunately, she is just as incorrigible as you.

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

Is that all our love is to you? Incorrigible? An inconvenience?

FRANZ JOSEF

Yes! That is exactly what it is! Tell me, nephew, there are dozens of princesses equal to your rank who would marry you in the blink of an eye. They would pledge their eternal love and fidelity to you without a second thought. So what makes this disgraced governess so special?

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

She understands me!

FRANZ JOSEF

Ha! Understands you? You are the heir to one of the largest empires in the world! She dusted bookshelves and emptied chamber pots for a living. She will never understand you.

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

She is the only one who knows that I am more than my position!

FRANZ JOSEF

You think you are more than your position? Your position will always be greater than you! That is awesome responsibility of being the ruler of the Habsburg Empire! And you have the audacity to jeopardize everything by marrying an ambitious house-maid. You will be a disgrace to the throne. If this is to be any indication of your disposition, young man, I dread the day you become emperor.

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

Sir, believe me when I tell you that if I cannot marry Sophie, you will not have to worry about me living to become Emperor.

FRANZ JOSEF

Marry her. Now get out of my sight.

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

Do you mean that, sir?

FRANZ JOSEF

Leave!

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND *turns and quickly leaves.*

Lights fade to black.

ACT ISCENE 11

1914. Sarajevo. GAVRILO PRINCIP, TRIFKO GRABEZ, and NEDELJKO CABRINOVIC are standing on a street corner. Sounds of a crowd can be heard offstage.

CABRINOVIC

Are you sure this is a good idea, Gavrilo?

PRINCIP

It is necessary, my friend.

CABRINOVIC

But that is the governor's mansion! There is no way we are going to get away with this.

PRINCIP

We're not trying to get away with anything. On the contrary, we are demanding that we be heard!

CABRINOVIC

And what will they do when they hear us, hm? Beat us? Imprison us? Execute us?

PRINCIP

Yes! All of those things are possibilities, but you knew that when agreed to join me. We all knew that from the start! Are you getting cold feet, Nedeljko?

CABRINOVIC

No! Of course not! I just don't know how the crowd that you drummed up will hold up in the face of danger.

PRINCIP

True. *(pulls hand out of coat pocket, revealing brass knuckles)* Considering it was the threat of danger that brought them here in the first place, their loyalties may not be as steadfast as yours, Nedeljko.

TRIFKO GRABEZ *runs onto stage.*

GRABEZ

Gavrilo!

PRINCIP

Trifko! What are you doing here? I told you to be on lookout for the guards!

GRABEZ

I was, but a man in a dark uniform slipped me this piece of paper with an address on it and told me to give it to you. It has the seal of the Black Hand on it.

CABRINOVIC

Who was this man, Trifko?

GRABEZ

I do not know. All he told me is that he knows that we want a united Serbia free from Habsburg rule, and that we should go to this address tonight if we really wanted to make a difference. He said our liaison would be a Colonel Dimitrijevic. What do you think, Gavrilo?

PRINCIP

If the Black Hand really wanted to help, they would be protesting with us today.

PRINCIP shoves the paper into his back pocket.

CABRINOVIC

Maybe we should consider going, Gavrilo. This man may be powerful!

PRINCIP

Or he could be a spy trying to entrap us! Trust me, friends. I've gotten us this far.

Whistles and shouts are heard offstage.

CABRINOVIC

It's the police!

PRINCIP

Go! Go! Hold them off as long as you can!

GRABEZ and CABRINOVIC run offstage towards the noise. Three guards run onto the stage and spot PRINCIP. Two guards grab PRINCIP. The third guard begins beating him with a baton. Eventually the guards drop PRINCIP on the ground and leave.

OSKAR POTIOREK enters flanked by two guards.

POTIOREK

I want this cleared up as soon as possible.

FIRST GUARD

Yes, Governor Potiorek.

POTIOREK

The Serbians need to learn their place in the empire. All of these insurrections are growing tiresome.

SECOND GUARD

Yes, Governor Potiorek.

POTIOREK *spies PRINCIP lying on the ground.*

POTIOREK

Who is that man?

FIRST GUARD *searches PRINCIP's coat.*

FIRST GUARD

According to his identification, this is Gavrilo Princip.

SECOND GUARD

Princip? Isn't he the one who organized the whole protest? Should we take him in for questioning, Governor?

POTIOREK

What for? His clothes are in tatters. He can't be older than twenty. His so-called friends have abandoned him. He is not a leader. He is nothing. Do get someone to clean the blood off of the sidewalk later, though.

POTIOREK *and the GUARDS exit.*

GRABEZ *and CABRINOVIC enter. They help PRINCIP sit up.*

GRABEZ

Gavrilo! Are you okay?! What happened?

PRINCIP

Nothing. He called me nothing.

CABRINOVIC

Who did?

PRINCIP

Where are the others?

GRABEZ

They all ran the minute the police showed up. Nedeljko and I circled around the block and then came back to look for you.

PRINCIP

They all ran?

GRABEZ

Yes.

PRINCIP

Then he is right. I am nothing. Serbia is nothing.

PRINCIP stands. He takes the paper out of his pocket and looks at it.

PRINCIP

Friends, we have a meeting tonight.

*PRINCIP, GRABEZ, and CABRINOVIC exit.
Lights fade to black.*

ACT ISCENE 12

The following two scenes occur simultaneously. The stage is bare. Spotlights frame YOUNG ARCHDUKE FRANZ FERDINAND and YOUNG SOPHIE CHOTEK on one side of the stage and ARCHDUKE FRANZ FERDINAND and SOPHIE CHOTEK on the other. The rest of the stage is dark. YOUNG FRANZ and YOUNG SOPHIE are dressed in regal wedding outfits. FRANZ FERDINAND and SOPHIE are dressed in formal travel wear.

FRANZ FERDINAND

Sophie, stop. There is no reason for you to come. Putting you in danger needlessly like this...It's foolish!

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

There is still time to change your mind. I wouldn't blame you if you did.

YOUNG SOPHIE

Franz, I want to marry you, and I will. It is as simple as that.

SOPHIE

The way I see it, not being at the side of the man I love, that would be the foolish thing.

FRANZ FERDINAND

I will not be able to guarantee your safety, Soph. The children—

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

But it's not as simple as that! As soon as you step through that door, you will never know privacy again. They will mock you, fear you, demonize you—

YOUNG SOPHIE

They will do the same to you! And if that is the case, we are blessed to have each other to cling to in the storm.

SOPHIE

The children will learn that their parents believed that love is the most sacred promise a person can make, and one of the noblest forces to live and die for.

FRANZ FERDINAND

I should have done more. I should have said more!

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

But what if we can't hold on?

YOUNG SOPHIE CHOTEK

We will hold on. Our knuckles may turn white. Our arms may burn with fatigue, but we will hold on. And one day, when the storm dies down, and the sun comes out, and the birds sing sweet songs, we will still be holding on, because by then, we will have forgotten what it felt like to be alone in the first place.

SOPHIE CHOTEK

More? Dear God, Franz, it is not you who needs to do more, it is them! You are not the problem. WE are not the problem Franz! Stop apologizing for the wrongs of the world, and start fighting them. And you are going to start by walking onto that train with me on your arm.

FRANZ FERDINAND

Will it mean anything, Sophie? Will we mean anything?

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

One day it will all change, Sophie. I will make sure of that. We will not live the rest of our lives as pariahs.

YOUNG SOPHIE CHOTEK

Don't make promises that you can't keep, Franz.

SOPHIE CHOTEK

I'm not sure. But we will not let them define who we are.

FRANZ FERDINAND

You really never will be Habsburg, will you?

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

Okay. No matter what happens, I promise you that there will never be a day that I don't love you.

YOUNG SOPHIE CHOTEK

Now that, I do believe.

SOPHIE CHOTEK

Never. But I will always gladly be the wife of one.

FRANZ FERDINAND *and* SOPHIE CHOTEK
kiss. YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND *and* YOUNG
SOPHIE CHOTEK *kiss. The kisses are*
simultaneous.

FRANZ FERDINAND and YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

Are you ready?

SOPHIE CHOTEK and YOUNG SOPHIE CHOTEK

Yes. Let's go.

Both couples turn upstage. They grab each other's hand and walk boldly into the darkness. Sounds of a train whistle and church bells overlap each other. The spotlights go out.

ACT 2SCENE 1

Sarajevo, July 1914. The following scene takes place in a dark, dingy coffee shop. In the room, a trio of Serbian nationalists anxiously wait. They are GAVRILO PRINCIP, TRIFKO GRABEZ, and NEDELJKO CABRINOVIC. There are several moments of nervous, anticipatory silence.

CABRINOVIC

This coffee is weaker than an Austrian's honor.

GRABEZ

Then why do you keep drinking it?

CABRINOVIC

(Shrugs)

It's still coffee.

PRINCIP

(Perks up)

Hush. I think that's him. *(Eyes follow an unseen person.)* No, I guess it is not.

GRABEZ

Maybe it is, and we're supposed to approach him.

PRINCIP

No, the note gave me very specific instructions to stay where we were. He would come to us.

CABRINOVIC

Maybe it is him, and he decided to cancel the whole plan after he saw us three sorry fools. Can't say I would blame him.

GRABEZ

What do you mean by that?

CABRINOVIC

What? Nothing.

GRABEZ

Are you prepared to do whatever necessary for this plan to succeed?

CABRINOVIC

Yes!

GRABEZ

It doesn't sound as if you have a lot of confidence in our operation.

CABRINOVIC

Calm down, Trifko. It was merely a joke to lighten the mood.

GRABEZ

Is this a game to you?

CABRINOVIC

Of course not!

PRINCIP

Like a couple of hens...

GRABEZ

You do know you could die, don't you?

CABRINOVIC

What are you talking about?

GRABEZ

If you are not prepared to kill anyone who stands in our way, you will be killed, Nedeljko.

CABRINOVIC

I understand that!

GRABEZ

Or maybe you won't...

CABRINOVIC

Don't you dare—

GRABEZ

I would imagine it's easy to stay so relaxed if you were a step ahead, wouldn't you, Princip? Just think how much easier we would all sleep at night if someone could whisper to us exactly what those devilish Austrians were up to.

CABRINOVIC

You better stop...

GRABEZ

Tell us, Nedeljko, how is your father?

CABRINOVIC *lunges for* GRABEZ. *They fight.*
PRINCIP *wrestles* CABRINOVIC *off of* GRABEZ

and knocks him back into a chair. GRABEZ crawls back into his chair.

PRINCIP

That is enough! Cabrinovic is here for the exact same reason we are. His blood is as Serbian as ours, Trifko! We cannot tear ourselves apart before we have even begun. Don't you see? This is how the empire keeps us caged like mongrels!

CABRINOVIC

Then maybe we should call it off, Gavriilo. Let's face it, if we can't even make it through a cup of coffee without being at each other's throats, what chance do we have at pulling off a plan like this?

GRABEZ

He's right. Who are we? A hotheaded failure, the son of a traitor, and you, Gavriilo: a scrawny reject from the Serbian army. We are nobody.

PRINCIP

NO! You know why you believe that? Because that is what the Austrians want you to believe! They have stolen your pasts! Perverted them! And shackled you with the weight of their shame. I understand, friends. You are exhausted. Too exhausted to think, too exhausted to care, too exhausted to fight! But we have been given a glorious opportunity to cast off our chains, to free all of our people, to reclaim our identities! We cannot afford to miss this chance. We will tear out the pages of our oppression, and in its place we will write a new future. A Serbian future! Brothers, will you join me?

Enraptured, GRABEZ and CABRINOVIC immediately grab PRINCIP's hand. DRAGUTIN DIMITRIJEVIC walks up behind the trio. They do not notice him.

DIMITRIJEVIC

Well spoken, Mr. Princip.

GRABEZ

Who are—

PRINCIP

Colonel Dimitrijevic! It is an honor, sir!

DIMITRIJEVIC

You're very eloquent. I feel as if you would have done quite well in the clergy.

PRINCIP

With all due respect, sir, I feel that the cause I am fighting for is just as honorable.

DIMITRIJEVIC

Just what I want to hear. We need those kind of thinkers in our ranks.

GRABEZ

Forgive my bluntness, Colonel, but are you here to merely make vocational recommendations, or do you have a job for us?

DIMITRIJEVIC

Quite eager to murder someone, aren't we?

PRINCIP

We're quite eager to serve our country.

DIMITRIJEVIC

To tell you the truth, I wasn't sure what I was going to tell you three. This is a very sensitive, and very unorthodox operation, and there were concerns within our organization that we couldn't entrust you with a mission this important. Are all three of you prepared to do whatever it takes to see this through? You could lose everything.

PRINCIP

Sir, the empire has taken everything away from each of us. We have nothing left to lose.

DIMITRIJEVIC

In that case, I look forward to seeing you in Sarajevo, gentlemen. Good evening.

DIMITRIJEVIC exits. PRINCIP, GRABEZ, and CABRINOVIC are left standing in the coffee house. They picture a brand new life for themselves.

Lights fade to black.

ACT 2SCENE 2

The morning of June 28th, 1914. FRANZ FERDINAND and SOPHIE CHOTEK have just exited the train. OSKAR POTIOREK greets them enthusiastically.

OSKAR POTIOREK

Your majesty! It is so good to see you! We are so honored by your presence.

FRANZ FERDINAND

Uh, yes. I'm humbled by your gracious welcoming.

OSKAR POTIOREK

It's not every day that the Archduke visits, now is it? We have a full day ahead of us, Your Highness. I'll have a porter take your bags to your room immediately.

A porter steps forward and takes FRANZ FERDINAND's bags offstage. SOPHIE is left with her bags.

FRANZ FERDINAND

May I have a porter for my wife's bags as well?

OSKAR POTIOREK

I'm so sorry! I didn't realize that you were bringing guests.

FRANZ FERDINAND

My wife is not a guest.

OSKAR POTIOREK

No, of course not! Please forgive me, I misspoke. You, take her bags at once.

Another porter steps forward and takes SOPHIE's bags offstage.

OSKAR POTIOREK

If you care to join the porter, Duchess, he will take you to your room.

SOPHIE

Room? That won't be necessary, governor, I will be joining you and the Archduke in today's proceedings.

OSKAR POTIOREK

Oh! I'm afraid that is quite impossible, Your Highness.

FRANZ FERDINAND

For what reason, Potiorek?

OSKAR POTIOREK

If the Duchess would be so kind as to give the Archduke and me a moment—

SOPHIE

I will not be so kind. Seeing as this matter directly concerns me, I will hear the reasoning.

POTIOREK *looks to* FRANZ FERDINAND

FRANZ FERDINAND

Well? The Duchess made herself perfectly clear.

OSKAR POTIOREK

Yes, of course. Well, I'm afraid it comes down to a matter of protocol.

FRANZ FERDINAND

Protocol?! I am the Archduke!

OSKAR POTIOREK

Yes, Your Highness, but as you know it is quite forbidden for those of lower statuses to accompany a royal personage on ceremonial visits.

FRANZ FERDINAND

“Those of lower statuses?” This is my wife, governor!

OSKAR POTIOREK

Your wife who is of a lower status! I'm sorry, Your Highness, but the rules go beyond both of us.

SOPHIE

If I may interject, gentlemen, I believe this issue of decorum can be resolved quite easily.

OSKAR POTIOREK

Oh? And what is the Duchess proposing?

SOPHIE

Well, it occurs to me that if this were a ceremonial visit, you would be absolutely correct, governor. Fortunately for all of us, though, this is not a ceremonial visit.

OSKAR POTIOREK

I must strongly disagree—

SOPHIE

I was not finished, sir. This is not a ceremonial visit, because my husband came to Sarajevo to inspect your fine military, did he not?

OSKAR POTIOREK

That is correct.

SOPHIE

Well, in that case, he is not acting as a royal personage, but as a military commander, and if I am not mistaken, there is no restrictive protocol regarding a military commander's guests.

OSKAR POTIOREK

... You are not mistaken.

SOPHIE

Then I will be waiting for you gentlemen in the car. Please do not take too long.

SOPHIE exits. FRANZ FERDINAND is beaming with happiness and pride.

FRANZ FERDINAND

I love that woman.

OSKAR POTIOREK

Your Highness, I have a confession. I was not trying to deter the Duchess from joining us because of the silly matter of rank.

FRANZ FERDINAND

Then tell me, Potiorek, for what possible reason could you have for humiliating us like that?

OSKAR POTIOREK

I was thinking solely of her safety.

FRANZ FERDINAND

Safety?

OSKAR POTIOREK

It is no secret that there are active anti-Austrian factions in this city, Your Highness. Now it is your responsibility to carry out your duties even in the face of great peril. You know this. But why allow the possibility for innocent men and women to get hurt as well?

FRANZ FERDINAND

You said—You said that your security was more than capable for protecting us on this trip!

OSKAR POTIOREK

And they are! No one will get hurt, Your Highness! I promise. But she means more than the world to you. I can see that. Do you really want to even entertain the possibility that something could happen to her? If I were you, I would beg her to stay in the palace.

SOPHIE *enters.*

SOPHIE

Are you coming, Franz?

OSKAR POTIOREK

I'll go check on the car.

POTIOREK *exits.*

SOPHIE

Franzi, what's wrong?

FRANZ FERDINAND

Soph, you can't come.

SOPHIE

Oh, not this again.

FRANZ FERDINAND

I'm serious! The danger is too great. It was one thing when we were back home, but being in Sarajevo now...I can smell the danger, Soph. Its rank stench fills my nostrils.

SOPHIE

Franz—

FRANZ FERDINAND

No! My mind is made up. You will stay in the palace.

SOPHIE

No, Franz, I am going with you. I almost lost you once. I won't allow it again—

FRANZ FERDINAND

Almost lost me? What are you talking about?

SOPHIE

Do you remember when we first got engaged and Montenuovo came to try to dissuade me?

FRANZ FERDINAND

Yes, of course, but I don't see—

SOPHIE

He did dissuade me.

FRANZ FERDINAND

What are you talking about?

SOPHIE

After he left, I wrote you a letter breaking off the engagement. He blackmailed me, my family. He told me that my father and brother wouldn't be able to get jobs, and that I held their fates, my family's fate, in my hands.

FRANZ FERDINAND

Soph...

SOPHIE

But I never sent that letter. I wrote it, I addressed it, I stamped it, but I never sent it. And I should have. I was being selfish. My family was on the line, and yet I could not bring myself to send that letter. I was not going to let myself be bullied by a pompous stuffed-shirt telling me who I could and couldn't love. And then you did something I never expected you to do. You fought for me. You fought for us, Franz, and you won! After that, my fears, my embarrassment, my shame, it vanished. I knew then that I had made the right decision. I knew I would love you forever. That is why I cannot let you get into that car alone.

FRANZ FERDINAND *kisses SOPHIE.*

FRANZ FERDINAND

I have often found that there are things in life we would do differently if we had to do them again. But if I had to marry again, I would do what I have done, without change.

OSKAR POTIOREK *enters.*

OSKAR POTIOREK

The car is ready, Your Highness. We should be going soon.

FRANZ FERDINAND

Yes, you're quite right, governor. The Duchess and I are ready whenever you are.

OSKAR POTIOREK

The Duchess will be joining?

SOPHIE

As long as the Archduke shows himself in public today, I will not leave him.

FRANZ FERDINAND

I trust that will not be a problem.

OSKAR POTIOREK

...Not at all.

FRANZ FERDINAND

Good. Then please lead the way, governor.

OSKAR POTIOREK *exits.*

SOPHIE

Let's go, Franz.

SOPHIE *takes FRANZ FERDINAND's arm*

FRANZ FERDINAND

Yes, let's.

FRANZ FERDINAND *and SOPHIE walk arm in arm offstage. Lights fade to black.*

ACT 2SCENE 3

June 28, 1914. Later that day. Lights up on a pleasant private suite overlooking the city of Sarajevo. The suite belongs to OSKAR POTIOREK. It is clean, posh, and oozing with self-importance.

Suddenly several men and women rush into the room with OSKAR POTIOREK following closely behind them. FRANZ FERDINAND is being carried by a few of the men, and SOPHIE is being carried by the others.

OSKAR POTIOREK

Quick! Put him down here! On the bed! Damn it! Hurry up!

The men place FRANZ FERDINAND on the bed carefully.

OSKAR POTIOREK

Where is the doctor?

FIRST GUARD

He's on his way, sir.

OSKAR POTIOREK

Well get him here sooner! Doesn't he know the Archduke has been shot?!

FIRST GUARD *hurriedly exits.*

SECOND GUARD

What do you want us to do with the Duchess, sir?

OSKAR POTIOREK

What?

SECOND GUARD

The Duchess. Where should we put her?

OSKAR POTIOREK

I don't know. Put her on the couch for now. She'll come to soon enough.

SECOND GUARD *places SOPHIE on the couch, then exits.*

FIRST GUARD *enters with DOCTOR*

FIRST GUARD

Here's the doctor, sir.

OSKAR POTIOREK

Thank goodness! He's on the bed. He appears to be bleeding some.

GUARDS *exits.*

DOCTOR

Some? Good Lord! It's gushing from his neck like a river! The shooter would've had to have fired from close range to do this kind of damage.

OSKAR POTIOREK

Well, it wasn't exactly clear how close the shooter got...

DOCTOR

How was the shooter able to get this close to the Archduke in the first place? Even the simplest of security measures should have—

OSKAR POTIOREK

Will you be able to save him?

DOCTOR

I will do what I can to stop the bleeding, but with this much blood loss this quickly, it does not look promising.

OSKAR POTIOREK

No, you don't understand. He has to live. The Archduke cannot die in Sarajevo from an assassination attempt. Do you know what that will do to the empire? Do you know what will happen to me?

DOCTOR

Unfortunately, governor, death cares little for politics. Who is that?

OSKAR POTIOREK

That's the Archduke's wife.

DOCTOR

Is she okay?

OSKAR POTIOREK

She fainted shortly after the Archduke was shot.

DOCTOR

That's understandable. Well, I don't envy you your task.

OSKAR POTIOREK

Task?

DOCTOR

You're going to have to tell her how her husband died.

OSKAR POTIOREK

Isn't that your job?

DOCTOR

We both know, governor, that you must be the one to bear this burden. I suspect the Archduke has a little less than ten minutes to live. I would use that time to think of what you're going to say.

DOCTOR *exits.*

POTIOREK *begins pacing frantically. Suddenly, FRANZ FERDINAND tries to speak. POTIOREK rushes to his side.*

OSKAR POTIOREK

Your Highness! What is it? What do you need?

FRANZ FERDINAND

Sopher!! Sopher!! Don't die! Stay alive for our children!

OSKAR POTIOREK

The Duchess is alive, Your Highness! She has merely fainted! Are you in pain?

FRANZ FERDINAND

It is nothing. It is nothing...It is nothing...It...is...nothing.

FRANZ FERDINAND *dies.*

Silence. POTIOREK remains motionless. GUARDS enter after several moments.

FIRST GUARD

We saw the doctor leave, sir. How is the Arch—

OSKAR POTIOREK

Wake the Duchess.

FIRST GUARD

(Begins gently shaking SOPHIE)

Yes, sir. Duchess. Duchess?

OSKAR POTIOREK

What is it?

FIRST GUARD

She's not stirring.

SECOND GUARD

(Begins shaking her a bit more forcefully.)

Let me help you. Duchess. Duchess!

SECOND GUARD stops shaking her. He pulls his hand away to reveal blood on his fingers.

Sir...she was shot too.

OSKAR POTIOREK

No...No, no, no! That can't be! That can't be! Out of my way! She was shot. She was shot too, and not one of us noticed. Both the Archduke and the Duchess were shot. The next generation of the empire died under my care. I am finished. I am nothing.

Waltz music begins playing downstairs.

FIRST GUARD

What is that?

OSKAR POTIOREK

That's the band I hired to welcome the Archduke after the parade.

SECOND GUARD

What are they playing?

OSKAR POTIOREK

The waltz that was going to be performed at today's luncheon: "No Life Without Love."

Lights fade to black

ACT 2SCENE 4

July 1914. Sarajevo. GAVRILO PRINCIP is sitting alone at a long table in an interrogation room.

OSKAR POTIOREK *enters.*

PRINCIP

Governor.

POTIOREK

Who are your accomplices?

PRINCIP

Why should I tell you anything?

POTIOREK

I am prepared— No, I want to ask for the ultimate punishment.

PRINCIP

I'm afraid your empire's law is binding your hands, governor. I am only nineteen, and therefore, I am unable to be subjected to the death penalty.

POTIOREK *grabs PRINCIP by the shirt.*

POTIOREK

Listen, you idiot. You have cost me my reputation, my job, and my future. It's true that the most I can ask for is twenty years, but twenty years is plenty of time for something to go horribly wrong, Mr. Princip.

PRINCIP

You don't remember me, do you?

POTIOREK

Remember you?

PRINCIP

No, of course you don't. Why should you? It's just as you said, I was nothing then.

POTIOREK

You're still nothing!

PRINCIP

If I was nothing, why would the governor of Bosnia and Herzegovina take so much time to talk with me alone?

POTIOREK

We've already arrested two of your co-conspirators. A Trifko Grabez and a Nedeljko Cabrinovic.

PRINCIP

What have you done with them?

POTIOREK

They are currently being interrogated. Same as you. Although, I'm not sure they will be as useful. They're just failures compared to you.

PRINCIP

They are just as dedicated to a free Serbia as I am!

POTIOREK

Oh really? According to our reports, Mr. Grabez lost his nerve as the Archduke's car passed and began walking home when he was picked up.

PRINCIP

Trifko...

POTIOREK

As for Mr. Cabrinovic, he did toss a hand grenade at the car, but it bounced off and exploded under the car behind the Archduke's. He then tried to commit suicide by biting into a cyanide capsule. When he realized the poison had expired, he tried to drown himself by jumping into the river. Unfortunately for him, the water was only a few centimeters deep. Those are your fellow Serbians.

PRINCIP

I am sorry I misjudged you, Nedeljko. I have more than made up for the mistakes of my peers. Things are going to change.

POTIOREK

Change? Change?! You delusional moron! Dozens— Hundreds of lunatics have tried to shake the continent by killing any number of self-important, bon-bon eating pigs without so much as a blink. And you! You pick the one royal family member who is equally despised by both his family and his subjects. I wouldn't be surprised if the Emperor slips you a medal under the table for your service. What could possibly make you think that change is going to come now?

PRINCIP

As a military man, you should know that it's not the size of the spark that matters, but the amount of fuel. And, governor, Europe is sitting on one massive keg of gunpowder.

POTIOREK

Not that it would make a difference to a moral degenerate such as you, but you also killed the Archduke's wife.

PRINCIP

For that, I am truly sorry. I never intended to take an innocent life.

POTIOREK

Oh, she's far from innocent.

PRINCIP

If I recall, she jumped in front of the Archduke when I fired the second shot, did she not?

POTIOREK

Yes, she did.

PRINCIP

Hm.

POTIOREK

What?

PRINCIP

Oh, I just think it's ironic.

POTIOREK

What's ironic?

PRINCIP

You were in charge of the Archduke's security detail, correct?

POTIOREK

Yes.

PRINCIP

And you were also in the car with the Archduke and his wife, yes?

POTIOREK

Yes, what of it?

PRINCIP

Shouldn't it have been your job to shield the Archduke from gunfire, governor?

POTIOREK

...Technically, yes—

PRINCIP

And yet you have the audacity to make unflattering remarks about the woman who sacrificed her life to do your job, and the pomposity to claim I am the moral degenerate. Good day to you, governor.

POTIOREK *exits. Lights fade to black.*

ACT 2SCENE 5

July 1914. FRANZ JOSEF's Royal Palace. FRANZ JOSEF is seated at his desk. ALFRED DE MONTENUOVO flits about him busily.

ALFRED

I need you to look over these arrangements for the funeral, Your Majesty.

ALFRED hands FRANZ JOSEF a stack of papers. FRANZ JOSEF diligently skims through each of them.

FRANZ JOSEF

Yes...Yes...This all looks good, Alfred. You really are attending to every detail, aren't you?

ALFRED

Is that not my duty, sir?

FRANZ JOSEF

Yes, but coffin materials? Casket heights? Arrangement of the honors for both the Archduke and his wife? I'm noticing a pattern, Alfred.

ALFRED

Is it not to your liking, Your Majesty?

FRANZ JOSEF

(Chuckles)

No, no, it's perfectly to my liking. I can't help but wonder, though, why you're going to the pains of following ceremonial court procedure so strictly in these regards. Know I mean no offense when I say it seems a bit...obsessive.

ALFRED

I simply wish to demonstrate that man and wife could not expect to be in equal in death if they had never been equal in life.

FRANZ JOSEF

Are you sure there's nothing personal there, Alfred?

ALFRED

My professional life is my personal life, Your Majesty.

FRANZ JOSEF

Excellent. Where is the speech writer? I need to talk with him.

ALFRED

I sent for him earlier, sir. He should be here shortly. I hope you don't mind me saying, Your Majesty, but you seem to be in a much better mood than I have seen you in a long time.

FRANZ JOSEF

I don't mind it at all, Alfred. Why shouldn't I be in a good mood?

ALFRED

Well, given the circumstances—

FRANZ JOSEF

Circumstances?

ALFRED

Your nephew's death, sir.

FRANZ JOSEF

Ah, yes...

ALFRED

I know you and your nephew had many...difficulties, but is it possible that you even feel joy at his passing?

FRANZ JOSEF

I do not feel joy, Alfred.

ALFRED

So you do feel grief?

FRANZ JOSEF

On a personal level, of course. The loss of family is never easy, Alfred. And though my nephew and I had our differences, I still loved him. But as Emperor of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire, I find that I must rise above the hum-drum emotions that beleaguer the average person. I must think on a grander scale. My welfare is the empire's welfare, and on that front, I would say that I feel relief.

ALFRED

Relief, sir?

FRANZ JOSEF

Yes, relief is the word for it. We both know my nephew was not fit for the job. He would have brought the empire to ruin. There has been a noticeable change in the air. All of Austria seems to be breathing easier. And I'm sure it would have been terrible for him too. He would have crumbled from the pressure. In fact, I think he would have been assassinated just the same had he

lived to become emperor. It wasn't a matter of if, but when. It's a shame that it had to be that way, but I am just glad he was able to leave this earth with his dignity intact.

ALFRED

And his wife?

FRANZ JOSEF

What about her?

ALFRED

Was it a relief for her too to have died in Sarajevo?

FRANZ JOSEF

I cannot say with any certainty...but I will say if she loved my nephew as much as she claimed, her soul should be perfectly content...wherever it is.

ALFRED

Well you may be right about the empire, sir, but as for the family, I'm afraid the Archduke and Duchess' deaths have made them something of martyrs.

FRANZ JOSEF

Martyrs? Ha! As if they even know the meaning of the word sacrifice.

ALFRED

Yes, well, at any rate the royal families are becoming more and more suspicious about the reports of your miserable health by the day. We had to turn away the King of Rumania at the border, and Kaiser Wilhelm is insistent about attending. He said he wants to come as a friend of the deceased, and that a royal reception was not necessary.

FRANZ JOSEF

Bah! Leave it to Wilhelm to act like an utter loon. Tell him that our security advisors have heard tell of a plot against him, and that it would be unwise for him to tempt fate in such a way. It's imperative that we prevent this from turning into a ceremonial funeral at all costs. If the Duchess received the same attention as the Archduke all we have fought for will have been for naught.

ALFRED

Yes, Your Majesty. I completely agree.

SPEECH WRITER *enters*.

SPEECH WRITER

You asked for me, Your Majesty?

FRANZ JOSEF

Yes, yes, my boy. It is a marvelous speech you have written for me. Simply superb. When you print the final draft, however, I want you to cut this line right here.

SPEECH WRITER

That line? If I may ask, are you quite sure, Your Majesty?

FRANZ JOSEF

Do you think I would call you all the way down here and waste both of our time if I wasn't completely sure?

SPEECH WRITER

Of course not, Your Majesty. Do you want me to replace it with something else?

FRANZ JOSEF

No, everything else seems to be in place, my boy.

SPEECH WRITER

Right. If I may use your personal phone, I'll call the typesetter right now.

FRANZ JOSEF

Go right ahead, young man. Now Alfred, I believe that we should be going. (SPEECH WRITER *begins dialing the numbers on the telephone.*) I want to go see the chapel you've picked for the ceremony.

SPEECH WRITER

Hello, Fritz? It's Klaus.

ALFRED

Yes, Your Majesty.

FRANZ JOSEF *and* ALFRED *exit*.

SPEECH WRITER

Fritz, I need you to make an edit to the typeface for the emperor's speech... Yeah, he wants to cut a line... Are you ready? Okay, it's "The death of my Beloved Nephew, a death painful to me..."

Lights fade to black.

ACT 2SCENE 6

Years before FRANZ FERDINAND and SOPHIE have met. FRANZ JOSEF and his son CROWN PRINCE RUDOLF are standing alone on stage. They are greeting guests of their royal ball. They nod and gesture occasionally as if a procession of people is passing them by.

FRANZ JOSEF

Don't slouch, Rudolf.

RUDOLF

You know, father, balls are supposed to be enjoyable.

FRANZ JOSEF

Is that what you think? Boy, is it that you can't learn or that you won't learn?

RUDOLF

I just don't see why it is such a crime to live my life with occasional pleasure. All of my life, I've never known you to participate in anything that might promise even the remotest bit of fun. You avoid it like the plague.

FRANZ JOSEF

Don't be dramatic.

RUDOLF

I was trying to restrain my theatrical flair. I was going to say you avoid it like me.

FRANZ JOSEF

You are being an impertinent ass!

RUDOLF

I'm sorry, father, I know how you would be crushed if he ever thought badly of you.

FRANZ JOSEF

What the devil are you talking about?

RUDOLF

That man right there. He's the reason you don't want me to embarrass you, isn't he? Tell me again, what is his name?

FRANZ JOSEF

How should I know? I don't remember him!

RUDOLF

Oh! Then maybe I was mistaken. Maybe it's her of whom you think so highly. What's her name?

FRANZ JOSEF

I don't know!

RUDOLF

Oh! Don't worry, I know the person must be around here somewhere...

FRANZ JOSEF

Stop your foolishness, Rudolf. You're just trying to distract me from the real issue.

RUDOLF

On the contrary, father, I'm trying to open your eyes to the real issue. Do you realize that in a crowd of hundreds imperial aristocrats and family members, you know practically none of them. And what's even more peculiar, you care more about what they think than about your own son.

FRANZ JOSEF

You don't get it, do you? I am preparing you for your future. The foundation of the royal family is built upon shifting sands, Rudolf. These jackals are always looking for an excuse to gossip. Gossip eventually falls into the hands of newspapers. Newspapers incite revolution. We cannot exhibit dysfunction. Our lives represent the best of the empire. If that image fails, so will it.

RUDOLF

I want something real! I want to live truthfully!

FRANZ JOSEF

Truthfully? Do you want it printed in every paper that you're a philanderer and a drunk? Ah, I can see you're surprised that I knew about that. You want to live truthfully and be loved? Not very likely, Rudolf.

RUDOLF

How did you know?

FRANZ JOSEF

About the women or the drinking?

RUDOLF

The women. I know you've seen me drink.

FRANZ JOSEF

Do you really think I wouldn't have ways of keeping tabs on you?

RUDOLF

How long have you known?

FRANZ JOSEF

Since you lured that first strumpet into your bed.

RUDOLF

Why haven't you said anything before?

FRANZ JOSEF

Because as far as the public is concerned, it didn't happen. Tell me, Rudolf, where is it written? Who has publicly accused you of such sins? No one. So I keep my head down and out of your sordid affairs.

RUDOLF

That's because no one else knows.

FRANZ JOSEF

Don't be an idiot. Of course they know. You think the whispering voices are about the hor d'oeuvres? Your wife certainly knows, you can be sure of that.

RUDOLF

Did you tell her to teach me a lesson?

FRANZ JOSEF

Don't flatter yourself. I don't care enough to get involved if I don't have to. As long as the marriage holds, I am satisfied. She's not blind, Rudolf, and you are not exactly the most discreet.

RUDOLF

I grant you that, but if she knows, why hasn't confronted me?

FRANZ JOSEF

Because, she unlike you, understands the value of the façade. How would it serve her to dredge up the truth? It would be an embarrassment to her, her family; it might even result in a divorce, and what would become of her then? She understands that truth is oftentimes nothing to be celebrated.

RUDOLF

If the truth terrifies us so much, perhaps we are not fit to rule.

FRANZ JOSEF

If we're not fit to rule, pray tell, who is? I'll be frank with you Rudolf, in an ideal world, you would be far from my first choice for ruler, but this is far from an ideal world.

RUDOLF

And I'm far from an ideal son. Is that what you're saying?

FRANZ JOSEF

You're far from an ideal ruler.

RUDOLF

(Muttered to himself)

Which might as well be the same thing.

FRANZ JOSEF

You're young, naïve, and irresponsible. But you will grow out of these faults in time. I will make sure of it.

RUDOLF

Where would I be without your guiding hand, father?

FRANZ JOSEF

Compensating for insecurity with impudence is not very becoming, Rudolf.

RUDOLF

Neither is compensating with tyrannical castigation, father, but I suppose the tree doesn't grow too far from the apple.

FRANZ JOSEF

This ball is growing rather tiresome, wouldn't you say?

RUDOLF

Yes, but I wasn't the one who wanted the dance in the first place. Remember that. Oh, look! It's Cousin Franz.

FRANZ JOSEF

And it's seems as if there won't be any relief.

RUDOLF

Careful about what you say, Father. The next emperor is walking towards us.

FRANZ JOSEF

What the Hell do you mean by th—

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND *enters and walks to RUDOLF and FRANZ JOSEF.*

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

Good evening, Uncle. Good evening, Rudolf.

FRANZ JOSEF

Good evening, nephew.

RUDOLF

Good evening, Franz! How are you?

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

I am doing well. Thank you for asking, Rudolf. I hope you are doing well.

RUDOLF

I've never been better, Franz. How is your family?

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

They are doing quite well.

RUDOLF

Ah, I see.

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

Yes.

FRANZ JOSEF

Well, this is riveting, but if you gentlemen will excuse me I should go make the rounds. I mustn't be seen as a negligent host. You understand, Franz?

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

Of course, sir.

RUDOLF

Yes, Father. We both understand the last thing you want is to be seen as neglectful.

FRANZ JOSEF *exits*.

RUDOLF

Now that the buzzard is gone, how are you really, Franz?

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

Much better, Rudolf. Much better. I apologize for my terseness a few moments ago. I don't know what it is, but your father has a way of making me feel as if I am under military inspection. I can't relax around him.

RUDOLF

It's not your fault, Franz. He doesn't want anyone to relax around him. Relaxed people talk more, and the more people talk, the more likely it is that he's going to be told something he doesn't want to hear.

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

If you don't mind my asking, Rudolf, how do you stand being around that all of the time?

RUDOLF

I don't.

The cousins share a laugh.

So tell me, cousin, is there any lucky lady who has caught your eye?

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

Oh, Rudolf, I'm not like you.

RUDOLF

Oh goodness, I hope not. And what kind of talk is that, Franz? You're a perfectly eligible bachelor. Any woman would be lucky to have you.

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

I'm not good at meeting people, Rudolf. I'm not charming, I'm not scintillating, I'm—

RUDOLF

You're a good man, Franz. And nowadays, good men like you are in low supply.

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

Yes, well, low supply does not always mean high demand.

RUDOLF

And high demand does not always mean happiness. Tell me, Franz, what do you look for in a woman?

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

Well for starters, they must be of the proper rank, of course—

RUDOLF

Oh, pish! Never mind that drivel. What do YOU want?

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

You mean if I could choose?

RUDOLF

You can choose.

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

Um, I'm not sure. I haven't given it that much thought. I just do what father tells me to do, because it's for the good of the empire.

RUDOLF

It's possible to something that is good for you and not bad for the empire, Franz. In fact, doing something good for you may be the best thing for the empire.

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

But the empire always comes first.

RUDOLF

If you think that way for too long, you will always come last. Now tell me, who would you marry if you weren't part of this family?

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

This is absurd—

RUDOLF

For once, indulge yourself! Now answer the question: Who would you marry?

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

Well, um, I guess I would want her to be pretty.

RUDOLF

Yes, go on.

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

I'd want her to be pretty...and smart.

RUDOLF

Come on, Franz! Be honest with me! Please...I know you've had to have given serious thought to this before. We all have at some point or another. I bet you even my father has a romantic side in his shriveled heart somewhere. Tell me what color her eyes are.

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

...Hazel.

RUDOLF

What kind of hazel?

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

Oh, Rudolf, you can't be—

RUDOLF

What kind of hazel?

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

A liquid hazel, like resin from a young sapling.

RUDOLF

And her hair?

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

Brown, but an earthy brown. A calming brown. Sable! That's it, sable!

RUDOLF

You also said smart.

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

Yes! I want her to be witty! I want to be able to talk hours upon hours with her about anything, and everything! I long for conversation. I'm so tired of sycophantic chatter!

RUDOLF

And her face? What does her face say to you every time you see it?

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

It says...Rest, Franz, you are not alone.

RUDOLF *walks over to YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND and grabs his shoulders. They are face to face, eye to eye.*

RUDOLF

Franz, I want you to promise me something. Never lose sight of this woman. If you find her, marry her. If you don't find her, never forget her. And when you are emperor, and you feel like you are drowning, remember that face and listen to it.

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

I—I promise, Rudolf. I will always remember her...Wait, when I am emperor?

FRANZ JOSEF *enters.*

FRANZ JOSEF

Ah, still jabbering on I see. Are you two all caught up?

RUDOLF

Oh yes, father. How did your rounds go?

FRANZ JOSEF

Fine! Fine! It's always the same. Flattery, deference, bowing, curtsying. It never ends.

RUDOLF

I'm sorry that upsets you so.

FRANZ JOSEF

I said nothing of the sort.

RUDOLF

I'm so sorry, Franz! I've kept you from enjoying yourself. Please go join in the dances.

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

It's always a pleasure, Rudolf.

RUDOLF

Believe me, Franz. The pleasure was all mine.

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

Uncle.

FRANZ JOSEF

Nephew.

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND *exits.*

FRANZ JOSEF

So what fascinating topics did you two talk about, hm? Horticulture?

RUDOLF

I'm not at liberty to discuss.

FRANZ JOSEF

Heh. Very well. Are you ready to mingle with the guests?

RUDOLF

As ready as I'll ever be.

FRANZ JOSEF

Good. And don't be nervous. None of them will say anything about your affair.

RUDOLF

That's what worries me most.

FRANZ JOSEF

Give it time, Rudolf. You will learn to appreciate this delicate system of ours.

FRANZ JOSEF *and* RUDOLF *begin to walk off stage. RUDOLF stops and turns towards the direction that YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND walked off.*

RUDOLF

Good luck, Franz.

RUDOLF *walks off after* FRANZ JOSEF.

Lights fade to black.

ACT 2SCENE 7

Inside a very austere funeral chapel. The casket of FRANZ FERDINAND and SOPHIE CHOTEK are clearly visible upstage. FRANZ FERDINAND's casket is much more ornate than SOPHIE's. It is also elevated above hers. A PRIEST is concluding the ceremony. FRANZ JOSEF is seated in the audience. A spotlight illuminates him among the crowd of silhouettes.

PRIEST

The Archduke and Duchess served the Lord faithfully and diligently. Their deaths are a terrible loss not only for the empire, but for humanity as well. That concludes the ceremony. At this time, anyone wishing to eulogize the departed is invited to do so.

FRANZ JOSEF stands. At this moment every eye is fixated on him. He then exits the pew and begins to walk downstage, out of the chapel. Lights fade to black.

ACT 2SCENE 8

*1889. Night. FRANZ JOSEF's royal palatial office.
The lights are off.*

*FRANZ JOSEF bursts through the door in a silk
night gown and turns on the lights. He is followed
by a ROYAL MESSENGER.*

FRANZ JOSEF

You better have a very good reason to wake me up at this time of night!

ROYAL MESSENGER

I assure you, Your Majesty, this is of the utmost importance

FRANZ JOSEF

Alright, then out with it.

ROYAL MESSENGER

Perhaps Your Majesty would be more comfortable if he were seated.

FRANZ JOSEF

I would be more comfortable in bed. Don't waste my time, boy.

ROYAL MESSENGER

No, of course not. So sorry, Your Majesty...There is distressing news regarding your son.

FRANZ JOSEF

Rudolf? Good Lord, what has the heathen done now?

ROYAL MESSENGER

Well, sir—

FRANZ JOSEF

Is it another mistress? She's claiming to be pregnant with his child, isn't she? That damn cretin!
We'll need to pay her off, then the family. He really is a burden—

ROYAL MESSENGER

Your Majesty!...Prince Rudolf is dead...He died at his hunting lodge in Mayerling this
afternoon.

FRANZ JOSEF

Hunting lodge...so it was a shooting accident.

ROYAL MESSENGER

...It wasn't an accident, Your Majesty.

FRANZ JOSEF

Not an accident?

ROYAL MESSENGER

The investigation concluded that he participated in a murder-suicide pact with his mistress, Baroness Mary Vetsera.

FRANZ JOSEF

Give me the note.

ROYAL MESSENGER

Sir—

FRANZ JOSEF

If it was a suicide, Rudolf would've written me a note. That boy is many things, but restrained is not one of them. I demand to see my note.

ROYAL MESSENGER

There was no note for you, Your Majesty.

FRANZ JOSEF

Then it could not have been a suicide. That wench, she must've murdered him and then killed herself after realizing what she had done. If there was no note, it was not a suicide, I am damn sure about that!

ROYAL MESSENGER

There were notes, Your Majesty. Three notes: One addressed to your wife, one addressed to your daughter, and one addressed to his wife, but we did not find a note for you. We scoured the place searching for it, but it was not there...I'm so sorry, Your Majesty.

FRANZ JOSEF

I see.

ROYAL MESSENGER

Is there anything I can do for you?

FRANZ JOSEF

No. You have done enough for tonight. I am going to go to bed. I have an early day ahead of me, and I will need my rest. Can't have the emperor looking fatigued, can we? What would the people think of that, hm? Please show yourself out.

ROYAL MESSENGER

Of course, Your Majesty. And if there is anything that I can do—

FRANZ JOSEF

Thank you, my boy, but that won't be necessary. I will manage.

ROYAL MESSENGER *exits.*

FRANZ JOSEF

I am spared nothing!

(Lights fade to black.)

ACT 2SCENE 9

1894. A Royal Ball in Vienna.

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND *enters. He is wearing an imperial officer uniform and a masquerade mask. He is reserved, but clearly anxious. He is waiting for someone. He checks his pocket watch.*

YOUNG SOPHIE CHOTEK *enters. She is also wearing a masquerade mask. She spots YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND and moves towards him. He does not see her.*

YOUNG SOPHIE

Good even—

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND *jumps.*

Oh my goodness! I'm so sorry! I didn't mean to startle you.

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

Startle me? No, you didn't— *(Clears throat)* It's—It's good to see you, Governess Chotek.

YOUNG SOPHIE

I told you, you can call me Sophie.

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

I remember, but that was a while ago, and I didn't know if your feelings towards me had cooled since then.

YOUNG SOPHIE

Would I have agreed to meet you incognito if my feelings had cooled?

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

No, I suppose not.

YOUNG SOPHIE

Well, now that that has been established I must ask you, do you know yet?

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

Know what?

YOUNG SOPHIE

Who you are.

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

Oh! Um...no.

YOUNG SOPHIE

And why not?

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

I haven't had the time.

YOUNG SOPHIE

You haven't had the time? To develop your identity?

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

To my uncle, being a good emperor should be my identity.

YOUNG SOPHIE

I believe at the core of every good emperor is a good person. I guess it is up to me to help you then.

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

You don't have to do that...

YOUNG SOPHIE

Yes I do. You see, that's part of my identity. I don't like to see other people suffer.

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

What's another part of your identity?

YOUNG SOPHIE

Let's see...I enjoy kind people.

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

Oh.

YOUNG SOPHIE

And I consider you a kind person.

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

But I don't have many friends. I'm terrible at conversation. I always end up offending someone somehow.

YOUNG SOPHIE

There's a difference between kind and charming. Some of the most charming people in the world are the most despicable. But we're getting off track. This is not about my identity. I have one, and it's a pretty strong one if I do say so myself. This is about you. So let's start with something simple: What do you like to do?

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

I like when my uncle let's me inspect the troops with him.

YOUNG SOPHIE

That's a duty. What do you do for fun? If you could not be the Archduke for a day, what would you do?

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

I would go to my hunting lodge.

YOUNG SOPHIE

Oh? And why's that?

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

It's out in the middle of the forest. And there's no one around for miles and miles. And I can tend to my garden. I like horticulture. And I hear so many things! There are so many birds, and deer, and rabbits, and bears, and their calls echoes off the trees, and then they fade away, like the end of a symphony when you've let your mind drift and daydream to the music, and now the instruments are slowly easing you back into the real world, but you feel different than you did before. You feel reborn! But most of all, you feel alone. Free from judgment, from expectations, from uniforms, and decorum, and etiquette, and disappointment, and him! Uh, that's why I would go to my hunting lodge...

YOUNG SOPHIE *impulsively kisses* YOUNG
FRANZ FERDINAND

YOUNG SOPHIE

Do you feel that way now?

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

Y—Yes.

YOUNG SOPHIE

Franz, I promise you while we are together, I will never ask you about politics, the empire, or your positions. I want to be with Franz Ferdinand, not the Archduke.

YOUNG FRANZ FERDINAND

I—I am in love with you.

They kiss again. A spotlight illuminates both of them. "No Life Without Love" begins to play. Light fades to black.

ACT 2SCENE 10

1914. Outside. FRANZ FERDINAND and ALFRED DE MONTENUOVO are standing side by side at attention.

ALFRED

Are you sure you don't need to rest, Your Majesty?

FRANZ JOSEF

As long as I am able, I will never shirk my duties, Alfred.

ALFRED

Who would have thought it would come to this?

FRANZ JOSEF

The way of the world is beyond me, Alfred. It's impossible to predict the ebb and flow of time and its consequences, so I do not bother to try. I plant myself like a rock in the river and make the water flow around me.

ALFRED

Yes, but the water eventually erodes the rock, Your Majesty.

FRANZ JOSEF

I know, Alfred. I know.

ALFRED

Is it possible, Your Majesty, that if the Archduke and his wife had lived, this could have been prevented?

FRANZ JOSEF

I will not deny that that is a possibility, Alfred. But this is not the first war, and it will not be the last. Our family will weather this as we have weathered the last 400 years. I fear more what would transpire had he lived to become emperor. Or worse, had she lived to become the emperor's wife. Yes, this war will be tragic, but no more than any other war. At least this way I know the empire will survive. My empire will survive.

Shadows of Austrian soldiers holding rifles pass in front of FRANZ JOSEF and ALFRED DE MONTENUOVO. They salute the soldiers as they pass. After several moments, lights fade to black.

THE END

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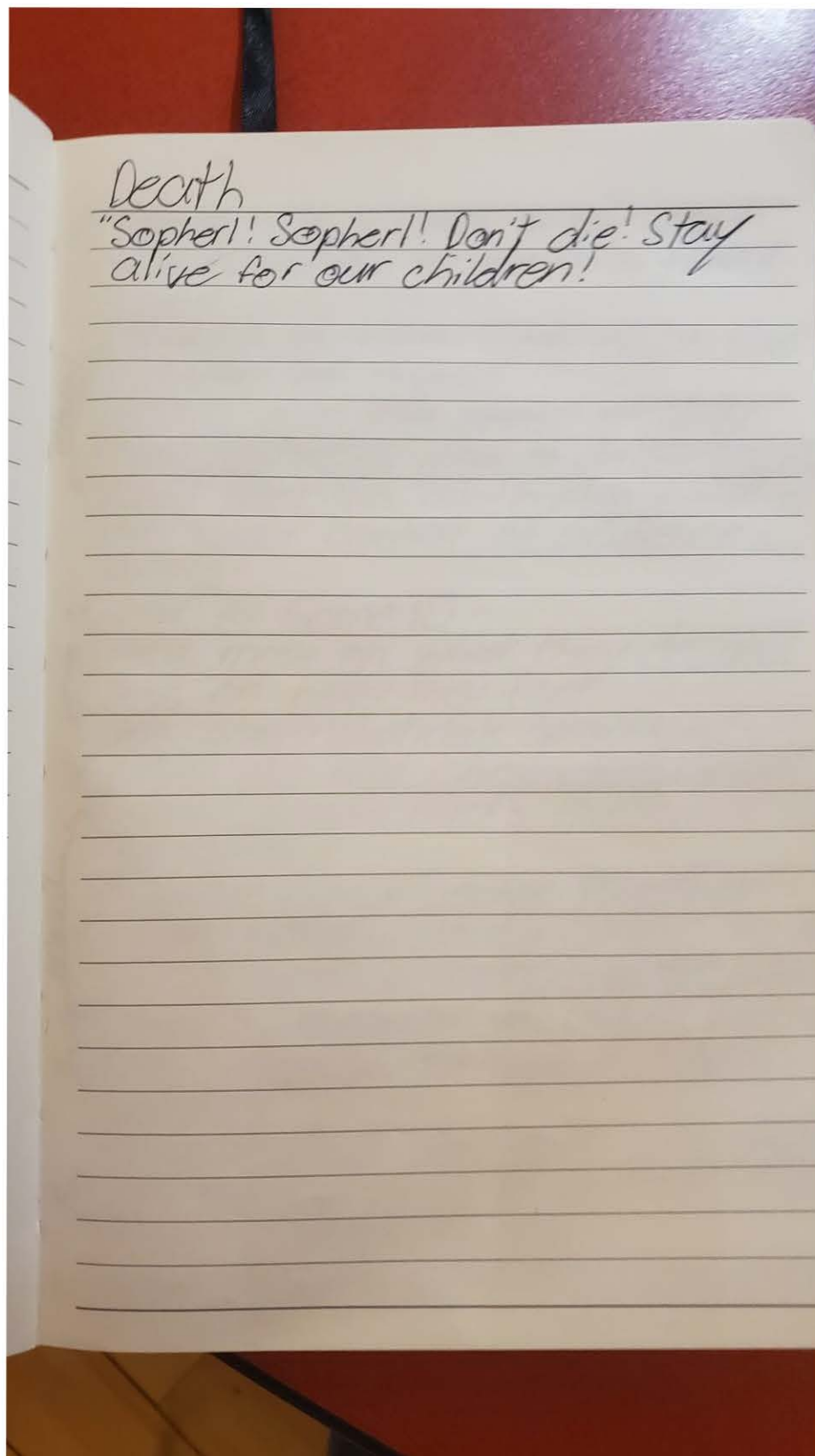
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Appendix A



Her Highness

• Franz Josef

- pleasant, guarded, and restrained (4)
- cold, suspicious, and intolerant (4)
- disliked confrontation and did not tolerate contradiction (4)
- Franz Josef berated a doctor for not coming in a tailcoat to help him when he was choking in the middle of the night (4)
- Franz Josef lived a dull, solitary life (4)

- wife, Bavarian Princess Elisabeth, was often away (4)

- + she was selfish and immature (5)
- + felt bored and confined at the imperial court (5)
- + Ashamed and betrayed - she basically left the emperor when he reportedly infected her with venereal diseases
- Franz Josef turned to mistresses, despite his image of a staunchly conservative Catholic (5)
- "He 'liked only a few of his relations, recalled his valet; he quite rightly considered that many of them acted incorrectly'. (5)

- Dragutin Dimitrijević - Chief of Serbian Intelligence, Head of Black Hand
 - built like a bull
 - had an essence of danger
 - flamboyant
 - ~~he thought the manoeuvres were a smokescreen to conceal a planned Austrian invasion of Serbia~~
- Gavrilo Princip - ideologue; leader
- Trifko Grabež - less idealistic, more violent, drawn in by the adventure
- Nedeljko Cabrinović - most carefree; resents his father who is an Austrian spy
- Franz Ferdinand before trip

"I have often found that there are many things in life that we would do differently if we had to do them again. But if I had to marry again, I would do what I have done without change." (197)

Her Highness

- * Franz Josef hates Ferdinand so much because he took the role his son, Rudolf, should have had.
- Also, Ferdinand represents the new age
- had a difficult relationship w/ Rudolf - he was never good enough for Franz Josef
- + Rudolf was a playboy prince

Plot Structure (so far)

Act I

- Opening scene after fall to establish core relationship & conflict (S&FF)
- Scene w/ Franz Josef & Prince Alfred to establish their whole thing
- Something here something here
- Something here something here
- Act I ends w/ Franz Josef refusing Franz Ferdinand's request to ~~not~~ have to go to Sarajevo

Act II

- Sophie & Franz in Sarajevo
- The Assassination
- The Funeral
- Breakdown scene w/ Franz Josef about Rudolf
- Scene emphasizing the old order & the new world split (Franz Josef & WWI)

Her Highness

- "Their empire was an anachronistic remnant of a previous age, 'a dynastic fiction' as one wit noted." (Morton, *Nervous Splendor*)
- "What remained [of the Habsburg Empire] was a ruling family rooted in tradition, its past glories supplanted by a string of failed monarchs, highly incestuous marriages, and a depressing family tendency to wreak chaos." (2)
- Franz Josef - 'almighty, a being of higher order, enthroned in regions beyond human aspiration.' (3)
- "... Franz Josef retreated to a world of archaic tradition, a universe of perpetual waltzes and sugary confections where he could ignore the unfamiliar and unwelcome modern age." (3)
- "preferred to keep to himself, isolated and unchallenged in his opinions." (3)
- at 84, preferred 6 flights of stairs to the elevator (3)
- "He no longer understands the times and the times pass on regardless."

Her Highness

- Archduke FF returns from his world tour more cynical, quicker to anger, & more vocal w/ his dislikes
- * FF goal is to be a good leader even though he doesn't want to be leader - do his duty *

Sophie Chotek

- daughter of diplomat
 - loving, but poor family
 - Father helped arrange Prince Rudolf's marriage to Stephanie of Brussels
 - hoped it would lead to financial improvement, but it didn't
 - Becomes a governess for Archduchess Isabella
- ## Archduchess Isabella
- overbearing
 - snobby
 - hard to serve
 - "Evil Stepmother" type
 - made condescending shows of giving her old dresses to her household (They never fit anyone)
 - Had governesses clean instead of maids to save money
 - Wanted to marry her daughter, Maria Christina, off to FF
 - used Sophie as bait to get FF to visit

Her Highness

- * Prince Alfred de Montenuovo treats Sophie like dirt to compensate for his own inferior lineage. Also, desperately wants approval of the Emperor (which he never gets)
- Franz Ferdinand
 - Quiet, withdrawn, introverted
 - Religious
 - has a temper
 - hunting is his favorite hobby
 - his younger brother is more outgoing
- Back to Rudolf
 - gave Ferdinand advice about living in moderation; looked after him in the military
 - killed himself in a murder-suicide pact w/ his mistress, Countess Mary Vetsera
 - wrote suicide notes to his mother, his wife, and his sister, but not to Franz Josef!
 - Rudolf joked w/ Ferdi, "The man walking towards us will become the Emperor of Austria" (19)
- Franz Ferdi met w/ Franz Josef after Rudolf's funeral - thought Ferdi was like
 - blamed him for Rudolf's death